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VISIONS, ILLUSIONS AND PERCEPTIONS:

THE STORY OF SOUL CITY

FOON RHEE
HONORS THESIS
16 APRIL 1984

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Duke University
DURHAM
NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Dear Colleagues:

I am writing in support of Foon Rhee's candidacy for honors within the history department. Foon's work on Soul Cityis remarkable. The richness of sources he has drawn upon almost boggles the imagination, particularly given the relatively short time period during which he pursued his work. There is enough research here to provide the basis for at least one or two master's essays, if not a dissertation. Furthermore, Foon uses the material with skill, moving easily between quotation of oral testimony and citation of government memoranda or newspaper stories. In addition to all this, the thesis is written beautifully, and Foon has responded extremely well to suggestions from Syd and myself that he put more structure and interpretation into his narrative. There has been substantial growth in Foon's approach to Soul City from the time the project began.

Perhaps most importantly, Foon has given us a clear and multi-faceted understanding of how and why Soul City suffered the fate that it did. We feel as though we know McKissick, and that the various themes in his life that came together in Soul City are clear and traceable, from the determination to be independent of white authority reflected in his early encounter with the white policeman in Asheville, through his "trading post" idea of the 50's, the encounter with rebuilding European cities after World War II, and the deep desire to create something lasting out of the turmoil of the civil rights movement. We also have a clear sense of how McKissick's vision became complicated, partly as a result of his own ambivalence about money, government support, and the world of industrial development. Above all, I think, we get a very distinct sense of how the federal bureaucracy's vision of Soul City occupied a totally different realm and reflected totally different priorities and values than McKissick's vision. It was no one's fault, specifically, yet in retrospect the project seemed doomed by virtue of the diametrically opposite preconceptions of the principal partners. The two world views could hardly have been more disparate.

In all of this, Foon is careful not to prejudge. The interpretation is there, but it comes out of the material and is not imposed on it. Although at times I think Foon is too gentle with McKissick, his basic approach to both sides in the issue is fair and balanced. In short this is an ideal piece of historical scholarship for the hoors seminar, and I hope it will be given serious consideration for the LaPrade Prize.

Sincerely,

W. C.

Bill Chafe

DUKE UNIVERSITY

VISIONS, ILLUSIONS AND PERCEPTIONS: THE STORY OF SOUL CITY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
FOR HONORS IN HISTORY

BY
FOON RHEE

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA
16 APRIL 1984

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Special thanks go to Jack Underhill, who opened not a few doors, not to mention files, at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, also in Washington, D.C. I hope he soon writes his own book about the New Communities program.

I appreciate the cooperation of all the persons interviewed for the paper. They gave me their time, in some cases their files, and always great insight into the subject, perceptions often only hinted at and sometimes entirely missed in written materials. I learned much more from them than what appears on the pages that follow.

Writing the thesis would have been much more a chore without the camaraderie and support of fellow Duke students in two year-long seminars: the senior history honors seminar and the oral history seminar, more formally known as History 196S-197S and

History 285S-286S, respectively. I hope my contributions and comments to their papers proved as valuable as theirs did here.

I owe much to the guidance of William Chafe and Sydney Nathans, who both unfailingly contributed their professorial expertise and encouragement. I only wish I had made more use of their experience.

I should also recognize the staff of The Chronicle, from which I diverted much time toward the thesis. Their understanding and continuing friendships made everything much easier. Sincere thanks to a few special friends who helped keep me sane through this sometimes wrenching process.

Finally, much gratitude goes to Floyd McKissick, without whose cooperation and encouragement I could never have begun this project, much less completed it. I'm not sure the thesis entirely reflects his view of events. Nor do I think he will agree with all my analyses and conclusions. I hope, however, that he gains some added understanding from my work, perhaps for use when he writes his own story.

As always, I must share the credit for any truth in the following pages. I accept all responsibility for any errors of judgment or fact.

CHAPTER ONE

VISION

I

North from Durham, N.C., Interstate 85 races through the North Carolina Piedmont for the Virginia border. The hypnotizing white lines blur past the swampy Neuse River, past abandoned barns, past billboards, past half-a-dozen clusters of fast-food restaurants and gas stations. The highway continues past the towels-by-the-pound outlet, past the fields overgrown with daffodils, just past the Warren County line and to the Manson Road exit.

Now a country road winds through rural Warren County. On the corner sits A. D. Evans general store/gas station in an absurdly patriotic red-white-and-blue building. A left turn, and another country road curves for a while. Finally, so suddenly as to take breath away, appears a tall wooden sign, like those announcing suburban subdivisions but larger, more elaborate. A right turn and over the railroad tracks, then the street-lights begin, lining a winding drive called Opportunity Road. A large industrial building now housing a sportswear manufacturer, a fire station and a swimming pool all sit on the left.

Streets, one named Liberation Road, intersect the drive. Down Duke Drive is a plantation house dating to 1790. And then the few houses -- ranch-style, duplexes, frame -- begin, situated on cul-de-sacs.

Finally, the road retraces its initial route, and certain traits become more apparent. Stray weeds are visible on the grassy -- once manicured -- slopes. The streetlights never brighten the concrete below. The fire station houses no engines. And the modern sign guarding the entrance is stained with rust from the serpentine, metallic logo.

It is not what Floyd McKissick envisioned.

II

The pale-colored walls reflected the antiseptic New York City hospital room. But one patient's mind was anything but sterile. Ideas flowed briskly through Floyd McKissick's consciousness for it was January 1967 and for McKissick a time for reflection.[1]

McKissick, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality, had injured his back six months earlier during a Mississippi demonstration. He finally sought hospital care, relenting when the pain became too severe and when he sensed the need for contemplation.[2]

There was much to ponder.

McKissick, born in Asheville, N.C., came from a "poor but happy" family with heavy educational and religious influences. Both his parents had attended college; their circle of friends also had strong educational backgrounds. One grandfather preached in a Baptist church; the other proselytized to a Methodist congregation. Ernest McKissick, though, toiled as head bellhop in the Vanderbilt Hotel. "There isn't going to be but one Tom in this family, and that's going to be me," McKissick remembers his father telling him. "So you go out and get yourself an education,

so you don't have to be an Uncle Tom."[3]

McKissick's education began in the streets of Asheville. As a child, he shined shoes, ran errands, cut wood, cleaned back yards, mowed lawns and met people. After building a wagon, he delivered fish, ice and other assorted goods. During the Depression, the few dollars McKissick brought in proved essential to his family. The work experience also catalyzed a lifelong philosophy. "I learned that if I became a good shine boy, I would not have to shine shoes long. If I became a damned good waiter, I would not have to be a waiter long. If I became a damned good bartender, then I had to go up to maitre d'. If I became a damned good maitre d', I would become the head waiter and then I would go into management and then I could control it and I then had the skills to do my own." Around the black neighborhood, he knew prostitutes, gamblers and illegal liquor makers; he learned when to keep his mouth shut and what to say when police made their rounds. "I didn't feel like a child," he recalls. "I was much older. . .virtually an old man."[4]

McKissick's recreation focused on his homemade wagon and his roller skates. These talents led to a crucial formative childhood incident that spurred another acutely pensive period and the beginning of his civil rights career.[5]

McKissick, then a 12-year-old Boy Scout, was directing traffic at a roller skating tournament when a white policeman assaulted him, both verbally and physically. "I was just hurt," he remembers. "Here this great big officer was just slapping me for nothing." He tried to call for help, but to no avail. He managed to take off a skate and then "swung that skate at him

with everything I had, and hit his hand, his glove or a combination." McKissick, though supported by the black community, found himself powerless in court since Asheville had no black lawyers. Although eventually released to his parents and punished only with in-school detention, it was then he decided he wanted to become a civil rights lawyer.[6]

"I knew then that God's word wasn't reaching folks the way it ought to."[7]

Following his father's admonition to get an education, McKissick saved up enough money for college by working for two years following graduation from high school. Conscription into the Army, however, interrupted his college plans. After an honorable discharge, he enrolled at Morehouse College in Atlanta and then North Carolina College in Durham, where he enlisted in the fledgling civil rights movement. Eventually, he became youth chairman of the state National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. After receiving his undergraduate degree, McKissick won admission to the University of North Carolina law school, breaking the racial barrier there. Admitted to the North Carolina bar in 1952, McKissick set up practice in Durham.[8]

McKissick argued numerous desegregation suits, including ones filed on behalf of his daughters to integrate Durham's public schools. "So all my kids went to integrated schools -- at a prolific price," he once recalled, defining the price: "Patches cut out of their hair, pages torn out of books, water thrown on them in the dead of winter, ink all down the front of their dresses. . ." He counseled and defended students during the 1960-63 sit-ins and demonstrations at Durham lunch counters,

theatres and other establishments.[9]

Later in the '60s, McKissick as Congress of Racial Equality chief, stood equal with Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young and other civil rights leaders. In June 1966, during the James Meredith March Against Fear in Mississippi, McKissick joined Stokely Carmichael in his rallying cry of "Black Power." He quickly developed a reputation as one of the most militant of major civil rights figures as the liberal-labor-black coalition crumbled.[10]

Six months later, in traction in the New York hospital bed, McKissick felt powerless. "I was laying on my back and I felt I couldn't help the civil rights struggle," he recalls.[11]

III

Inexorably, McKissick's thoughts turned to a two-decade-old vision with a much longer history.[12]

In December 1945, McKissick returned from Army service in Europe with the idea of building new towns in the rural South. After Nazi Germany's fall, McKissick saw entire towns being rebuilt in a precursor of the 1947 Marshall Plan. In the towns of Lille, Torcoing and Roubaix in northeastern France near the Belgian border, McKissick participated in the rebuilding. "We would clean up an entire village, and break up the brick and help concrete people mold and move town stands, village squares, streets and plumbing." he remembers. Before his discharge, he also visited rebuilt towns in both France and England. And on his return home he told his relatives and Army buddies: "If we can spend all this time over in Europe building, we can sure

go back down South and build."[13]

When McKissick returned to North Carolina after World War II, however, he decided his new town idea's time had not yet arrived. "I was black and when I got out of the Army the first thing that was called to our attention was that we were black and we were going back to our place in society," he remembers. Thus, he pursued further education and focused his efforts on civil rights. "That became my number one thought," he recalls. "The new town concept became secondary. My first concern then was getting rid of segregation in the United States."[14]

Though McKissick focused on desegregation, during those years of civil rights activity, he honed his ideas regarding his new town. During voting rights drives in eastern North Carolina, McKissick repeatedly noticed the pervasive economic pressures applied to blacks who engaged in civil rights activity. Farmers who bought fertilizer and other supplies on credit were especially vulnerable to the whims of segregationist merchants and bankers. "In the South here, you couldn't buy fertilizer if you sent your kid to an integrated school. If you went to a Howard Johnson's or a Holiday Inn, the minute you went in to take advantage of your civil rights, there was a foreclosure on your house." McKissick suggested the idea of cooperative trading posts to colleagues as a way to ease such pressures. Daniel Pollitt, a UNC law school professor who sometimes accompanied McKissick on the registration drives, remembers: "I think the trading post was the basic concept that led" to the new town -- an attempt to "create in essence a black community which is self-supporting and doesn't need credit from the white Mr. Biggs."[15]

McKissick discussed the trading post concept on several occasions with representatives of The North Carolina Fund, a non-profit charitable corporation formed in 1963 by then Gov. Terry Sanford. One proposal imagined 1,000 disadvantaged families investing $10 in a cooperative. The discussions and meetings culminated in a conference at Shaw University in Raleigh, sponsored by The Fund. McKissick presented his ideas to about 400 people from 42 counties, including many civil rights activists in attendance.[16]

The trading post idea, however, receded into the background, at least for the moment, as the civil rights struggle flowered and also changed in fundamental, though not always discernible, ways.

The student-led sit-ins and the Freedom Rides, emphasizing direct action and confrontation, exposed the evils of American society. These efforts helped spur the passage of civil rights acts which, if only statutorily, ameliorated segregation. Then, political power received greater focus through the Voter Education Project, the March on Washington, the Freedom Vote and Freedom Summer in Mississippi and the 1964 Democratic convention in Atlantic City. Even during this period, however, crucial divisions and dilemmas in the movement rose to the surface, hinting of incipient changes.

McKissick became chairman of one of the major civil rights groups, CORE, in 1963, riding a wave of sentiment for greater black leadership.[17] In 1964, McKissick defended the ideal of nonviolence, increasingly under siege in the face of repression and murders of civil rights field workers.[18]

1966 proved to be a turning point for the civil rights movement, when many of the questions and disputes came to the forefront. CORE and McKissick were no exception. Changes in sentiment among black militants and broader developments nationally deeply affected both CORE and McKissick. Pride stemming from the early successes of black protest, disappointment with President Lyndon Johnson, the movement's fragmentation, realization that the problems of the black masses were more intractable than originally supposed, the riots that flared in 1964-65, all paved the way for the emergence of Black Power. That phrase, first uttered in public during the Meredith March Against Fear, heralded the beginning of a new phase of the black struggle as white liberals, labor activists, black reformers and black militants -- at one time all under the civil rights umbrella -- went their separate ways.[19] The 1966 CORE convention endorsed the Black Power slogan, reversed its policy or official silence on the Vietnam War and discarded CORE's commitment to nonviolence.[20]

CORE, a basically middle-class black organization, languished in its efforts among the black poor. McKissick, the candidate of the separatist contingent on the supervisory National Action Council, succeeded James Farmer as national director in 1966, largely because Farmer and others believed he had the "empathy and ability to articulate the feelings of the ghetto." The NAC's intent, one source at CORE said at the time, was "to give the strongest kind of mandate to community organization in the ghettoes." McKissick's actions seemed to justify his supporters' faith. McKissick shifted CORE's focus to improving ghetto conditions. He moved CORE's headquarters to Harlem and began a

major project in the Baltimore slums.[21] The shift attracted a surge of ghetto recruits. Membership, which dipped to 80,000 under Farmer, rose to 120,000 by October 1967; the number of chapters burgeoned from 140 to 216. The selection of McKissick, however, also proved divisive. Many CORE chapters criticized the choice; some opponents left CORE entirely. The resignations of longtime members marked the end of an era for CORE. Schisms within the organization deepened dramatically.[22]

Internal dissension comprised only one of many problems McKissick inherited from Farmer. Clearly, the organization was deeply troubled. CORE's alignment within Black Power too further alienated supporters and mostly white benefactors attracted by the organization's traditional philosophy of interracialism and nonviolence. Lillian Smith, a white author and one of CORE's oldest and most valued supporters, abruptly quit the board of advisers, charging that CORE had been "taken over by adventurers, nihilists, black nationalists and plain old-fashioned haters." CORE also faced charges of anti-Semitism, stemming from an ill-advised remark made in anger by a Mount Vernon, N.Y. CORE official. McKissick did much to disassociate CORE from the charges, including the revocation of the offending chapter's charter. "We would, of course," he said, "like to have everyone love us, if at all possible, and we hate to lose friends. There is no question about that. But if people get disturbed by changes in policy, it simply means that we will have to move the organization along without those people."

The loss of its more affluent members, though, did not help CORE, already in desperate financial straits. McKissick, whose

highest priority was to save the organization, embarked on an austerity policy, even at the cost of sacrificing programs and projects. Before entering the hospital, he announced that CORE's debt had been cut from $350,000 to about $275,000.[23] CORE's financial condition weighed heavily on McKissick's mind during his 1967 hospital stay. "I never was taught to be a beggar," he recalls. "I was not going to be the leader of an organization that had to beg for a living."[24]

McKissick also worried about his philosophical differences with many CORE officers. Fundamental disagreements occurred as CORE members tried to translate Black Power from rhetoric to action and to convert emotional gains from past demonstrations to more permanent advances. They all basically concurred on the ends -- empowerment and betterment of the black populace -- but diverged on the means. "CORE became more radical in its tendencies and less concerned towards economic development," McKissick recalls. "CORE had more revolutionary tendencies and I did not think that we could succeed with the use of violent tactics. I could not accept that."[25] He also disagreed with CORE's move toward white exclusion. Growing pressures transforming CORE into an all-black organization culminated in the 1967 convention, which deleted the "multiracial" from the constitution. Subsequently, white membership in chapters declined more dramatically. In the summer of 1968, when CORE officially prohibited whites from active membership, they had practically disappeared from the group.[26]

McKissick too, faced challenges to his leadership as CORE declined. Among the grievances against him: chapters resented

increasing centralization, the NAC blamed McKissick for not carrying out their decisions and his opponents criticized CORE's acceptance of a $175,000 Ford Foundation grant for a project in Cleveland's ghettoes. In sum, the end of McKissick's days in office lay not too far ahead barring major changes.[27]

And during his hospitalization McKissick clarified his ideas on what route the civil rights movement, by now rather muddled, should take. "My theory was that we needed some degree of permanency and needed to look toward the creation of jobs and economic ventures," he remembers.[28] This economic emphasis reflected his business background and entrepreneurial experience, which began in Depression-era Asheville when he delivered fish, ice and other assorted goods using his homemade wagon.[29] He decided that his new town concept, which had lain relatively dormant all these years, would ultimately test this direction.[30]

The time for reflection had proved fruitful. When McKissick left the hospital after several weeks he had a clear idea of his future plans.[31] To McKissick, as he walked out of the hospital, it seemed a propitious moment to fulfil his vision. "I made the decision that whatever we did would have to be accomplished during these times," he recalls. "I felt that the impact of the civil rights movement was slowly waning.[32] His move, too, almost seemed dictated by fate. "Men are made for times," he recalls thinking at the time, "times are not made for men. And right now we would have to move."[33]

And move he did.

During the long, hot summer of 1967, riots flared in Newark and Detroit and President Lyndon Johnson appointed a blue-ribbon

panel to "investigate the origins of the recent disorders in our cities."[34] While the nation's attention focused on the troubled ghettoes, McKissick traveled regularly between New York and North Carolina and formulated programs for economic development, including a new town.

CORE's "Black Manifesto," written by McKissick and released on July 31, offered his vision as one solution to growing unrest. ". . . (W)ith land the government now owns, or could acquire, new cities can, in fact, be built to be owned and controlled by Black People -- with technical assistance coming from the government and private industry to develop the resources where these people live," the manifesto proclaimed. A later CORE tract stressed the need to address the problems of the rural South in such an effort. A program of "urban and rural reconstruction," the proposal stated, could "transform the energy of social protest into constructive activity for community development and social change."[35] CORE's 1967 program included the development of black cities. Young ghetto activists, according to the plan, would be encouraged to move into underdeveloped black areas and build communities. "We're going to forget about being dike savers; we're going to use our energy to build anew," said Robert Carson, chairman of the Brooklyn CORE chapter, which announced plans to resettle 5,000 ghetto residents back-to-the-farm. On the farm, Carson promised, "We will work on our land by day and plan at night for that day when the Negroes and the black people will call us from our forced exile to lead the vanguard, to structure the change which must come about, if we members of the black race are to survive in this country."[36]

In Septmeber, McKissick took a leave of absence from CORE to concentrate on his new town project, under the aegis of the Metropolitan Applied Research Center. Although he had read about new towns previously, the MARC fellowship allowed him to update and deepen knowledge.[37] He made contacts in financial and business circles, visited various colleges, read "everything you could" on new towns. The available material on new communities was certainly voluminous and diverse, ranging from Biblical mentions to articles about more recent examples in the United States.

IV

McKissick's idea was not new. Biblical kings, Greek philosophers and Roman emperors built new settlements for religious, commercial and defensive reasons. Renaissance thinkers, explorer-kings and 18th and 19th century philosophers all pursued the idea to overcome dehumanizing urban conditions. National governments supported the notion as a means of achieving national economic and social goals.[38]

The earliest hints of the garden city, marking the beginning of modern notions of planned new communities, dates to an 1857 lecture by Christian socialist Charles Kingsley, an Englishman. Fellow Englishman Ebenezer Howard's advocacy of garden cities designed as alternatives to established towns, resulted in the first one -- Letchworth in 1902.[39] In the United States during the 1920s, planner Clarence Stein guided two significant attempts to imitate the English model. Sunnyside Gardens in New York City and Radburn, N.J. marked the first private American efforts to

develop new towns.[40]

With the exception of U.S. Housing Corps efforts in 1917-18 to create permanent communities to alleviate wartime housing shortages, the first substantive federal involvement in planned new communities waited until the Depression years.[41] President Franklin Roosevelt established the Greenbelt program, which originally included eight large new communities, designed for the unemployed as well as planning experiments. Congress undermined for the eight, however, when it appropriated less than one-half the funds requested. Three Greenbelt towns ultimately developed.[42]

The legislation also included almost 100 other, smaller new communities though the three Greenbelt towns received the bulk of federal aid. Although the Roosevelt administation repudiated the New Deal communities as a part of government policy and though it removed government controls before most social experiments finished, about 100 communities, including housing for 10,000 families, developed.[43] Through World War II, no other significant new towns evolved in the United States.[44]

The New Deal communities saga is instructive in several important respects. The communities, the focal point for ideological clashes, reflected one of the clearest repudiations of America's individualistic tradition. The emphasis on community became a synonym for collectivism. The new towns grew out of the reforming zeal of their creators and a back-to-the-land movement, resurgent in the depths of the Depression, which unified various philosophies. All had schemes for moving the unemployed and discontented back to the soil.[45] McKissick's vision, in part,

appealed to similar notions. Generally, he thought his new town might attract blacks, increasingly concentrated in troubled northern cities, and might stem migration of blacks from the rural South.

For the subsistence homesteads, the crucial elements in success included their location, the soil fertility and the availablity of industrial employment. The people selected as settlers also determined the success of both the homesteads and towns. The new situation and standard of living required tremendous social adjustments. The problem of economic opportunities plagued the entire program, especially those communities planned without a sufficient economic base.[46] As McKissick's plans for his new town in the rural South progressed, those elements for success, especially the latter, loomed increasingly large.

Though the Department of the Interior, the supervisory federal agency, yielded to prevailing racial norms, it constructed several all-black projects. The department considered 30 communities, drew plans for 15, and received application for four; yet in 1935 none of the 35 New Deal towns then under construction was black.[47]

As economic conditions improved and the pre-Depression society emerged, the communities became more controversial -- in the minds of many congressmen "disreputable, heretical and exceedingly wasteful symbols of misguided idealism."[48] The new towns foundered not because of disenchantment with the community ideal but because of the controversial ideas of some directors, unforseen practical difficulties, problems from uncoordinated and

hasty efforts by a rather inflexible federal government, organized opposition to the New Deal and declining sentiment for reform after 1936.[49] McKissick worried that his new town might meet similar hurdles.

In retrospect, historian Paul Conkin concludes, the New Deal community program's value lies in its revelation of the difficulties of detailed social planning and a rapid transition from an individual to a more collective society.[50]

V

The idea of new towns also strikes resonant chords within Afro-American history. Black nationalism has been an omnipresent undercurrent within the general assimilationist tenor of black struggle. The development of all-black towns, within the context of internal migration, epitomized self-help and racial solidarity.

The underlying ideology for such efforts existed since the antebellum years, though it found the most evident expression during the 1880s.[51]

Black novelist Zora Neale Hurston relates the story of her hometown, Eatonville, Fla., incorporated in 1886 as the first all-black town. She describes Joe Starks, soon-to-be Eatonville's first mayor, as he first walked into town. "He had always wanted to be a big voice, but de white folks had all de sayso where he come from and everywhere else, exceptin' dis place dat colored folks was buildin' theirselves. Dat was right too. De man dat built things oughta boss it. Let colored folks build things too if day wants to crow over somethin'. He was glad he had his money all saved up. He meant to sit dere whilst de town wuz yet a baby.

He meant to buy in big. It had always been his wish and desire to be a big voice and he to live nearly thirty years to find a chance."[52]

Though many attempts failed, blacks created a significant number of all-black towns, primarily in the South, but scattered across the country from Whitesboro, N.J. to Allensworth, Cal. Mound Bayou, Miss. and the Oklahoma towns merit designation as the most famous of the all-black towns.[53]

After Emancipation most former slaves of the Five Civilized Tribes remained in Oklahoma. The all-black towns arose as an effort to secure their position within the state.[54] Of the 25 towns developed between 1890 and 1910, Langston was the first and Boley the most celebrated.[55]

The story of Langston City is primarily that of one man: Edwin McCabe. Born in poverty in the East, McCabe became a successful politician and land promoter; eventually he was appointed the Kansas state auditor. He left Kansas to found Langston City, recruiting blacks from the South -- titles to lots, railroad tickets and copies of the Langston City Herald in his pockets to entice prospective residents. The black migration to Oklahoma occurred simultaneously with back-to-Africa movements led by Martin Delaney and others. For many Oklahoma seemd a closer and more practical possibility. McCabe envisioned a black majority in each election district which would vote the territory a black state with Langston City as capital and himself as governor. He disappeared from the scene, however, perhaps tiring of his enormous task, perhaps the victim of the racism he hoped to escape.[56]

Boley gained unprecedented national attention when Booker T. Washtington visited the city in 1905. Boley, he declared upon his arrival, "is the youngest, the most enterprising and in many ways the most interesting of the Negro towns in the United States."[57] The town, he continued, represented a "dawning race consciousness, a wholesome desire to do something to make the race respected; something which shall demonstrate the right of the Negro. . .to have a worthy and permanent place in the civilization that the American people are creating."[58]

Washington's enthusiasm for Boley reflected his emphasis on agriculture and rural land ownership. He constantly criticized black migration to the cities where he thought the black was at his worst and repeatedly insisted that blacks should stay on the southern farmlands. Washington showed considerable pride in the all-black communities, as they appealed to his middle-class and Social Darwinist values and ideas of necessary struggle in achievement.[59]

The all-black town also came to the attention of another major black thinker of the era, W.E.B. Dubois, often Washington's intellectual foil. DuBois suggested that socio-psychological forces contributed to black migration in addition to the economic drives emphasized by Washington. Descriminatory conditions, DuBois proposed, compelled blacks to gather together, seeking security and social and economic progress among themselves. The all-black towns in the Far West seemed to offer some evidence for DuBois' view. Such justifications and rationalizations of racial separation characterized these communities. The towns emphasized racial solidarity to solve problems and envisaged a Utopian society

where blacks could live untainted by racism and undertake their own elevation without white assistance or interference.[60]

McKissick's ideas about the new town contained strains from both the thought of Washington and DuBois and perhaps a little of Joe Starks and Edwin McCabe. He shared Washington's concern about black concentration in the cities and an emphasis on economic uplift. McKissick also drew upon the DuBois notions of racial solidarity. He remained unsure, however, on the overtly separatist nature of many all-black towns and wavered on the influence of such thought on his vision. And clearly, McKissick's evolving vision continued some of the qualities epitomized by Starks and McCabe.[61]

Like the New Deal communities, the all-black towns in Oklahoma and elsewhere offer several lessons, which gained more relevance to McKissick's project as it progressed from vision to reality. Historian August Meier acknowledges the emphasis on racial pride and solidarity within separatist notions. "Yet," he writes, "behind the facade of optimism and self-assurance, behind the assertions and success, there lay a story of vicissitude and ultimate failure." The all-black towns remained small communities that were "more significant as a symptom of a certain racial philosophy than as a solution to the race problem in America."[62]

Despite some lively beginnings and some economic success, the Oklahoma towns failed as residents ultimately drifted to the cities or left the state entirely. Yet at statehood, blacks outnumbered both Indians and first- and second-generation whites.[63] At statehood, black leaders looked to a significant role within

the state. Those hopes, however, were dashed three years later when the state legislature enacted a grandfather clause. What the law left of black independence, whites took away through fraud and violence. All of which led historian William Katz to argue that the Oklahoma all-black towns' experience proves how fallacious is the belief that black Americans could escape racism by developing their own segregated communities. "The black enclaves of Oklahoma fell victim to the white supremacy they had fled. The black dream of Oklahoma became another southern nightmare."[64]

VI

After the barren war years, the new town movement underwent a revival. Britain's first post-war new town, built at Stevenage in 1946, went well beyond the simple garden city. The British planners emphasized the complete community, with housing, employment and recreation. They also highlighted the neighborhood principle, traffic separation and some concept of social balance as a desired goal.[65] Other countries, including Japan, Australia, France, Germany and the Scandinavian nations followed Britain's lead, though sometimes modifying the British approach to meet their respective needs. The most widely acclaimed new town, Tapiola, Finland just outside Helsinki, began in 1952. Divided into several villages separated by green-belts, the town epitomized architectural diversity.[66]

In the United States a similar resurgence occurred. Park Forest, Ill., begun 10 years after the Greenbelt towns, is considered the first private, wholly new community initiated in the

United States and the only one then acclaimed a proven financial success by its founders and developers. Another decade passed before other developers built on that accomplishment. In 1962, Robert Simon started Reston, Va. and Jim Rouse began Columbia, Md. Both proved popular alternatives to the numerous suburbs surrounding Washington, D.C. These developments quickly became the ideal for new communities to aspire towards. The federal government, encouraged by Reston and Columbia, reentered the new town scene with the passage of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965. Title X of that legislation included mortgage insurance for land. Government reinvolvement reflected a growing concern about deteriorating inner city conditions, increasing suburban flight and urban sprawl.[67]

McKissick's concept then appealed to constant strivings for better living conditions reflected in the various new town movements in Europe and the United States. His ideas also had antecedents in the annals of Afro-American history. After Reconstruction, black-controlled new towns developed a freedmen discovered problems more insidious than overt segregation. In the river of black struggle, others had traveled this tributary before. His notions also paralleled increasing federal concern and commitment during the 1960s toward ameliorating inner city conditions. McKissick's vision, while still rather vague, encompassed facets from all these sources. But because of the mixture of social improvement, economic uplift, political independence and possibility of significant federal support, all in a rural southern location and primarily for blacks, his vision also differed from any single previous new town. McKissick drew hope

that his vision neared maturity at a particularly opportune and crucial time. Yet his vision faced a chronicle of infrequent success and troubling lessons. Often, others' visions turned out to be illusions of the most disheartening kind.

Events in the first half of 1968 seemed to validate the new direction McKissick had devised for CORE -- a constructive rather than destructive Black Power.[68] The Black Panthers gained prominence in Oakland, Cal., attracting many CORE members and further decimating CORE's ranks. In February, the President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders issued a report identifying the major cause of the riots as the existence of two societies one black and mostly in the central cities, one white and principally locating in the suburbs, "separate and unequal."[69] In April, Martin Luther King Jr. fell victim to an assassin's bullet in Memphis, triggering a wave of violence in over 100 cities.[70]

McKissick's standing within CORE, however, had not improved markedly and he struggled for the favor of his colleagues. Yet, McKissick, despite criticism directed at him, went to CORE one final time. After all, McKissick, at the center of earlier turning points in CORE's history, might again determine the organization's fate.

After much preparation, McKissick presented his program to the NAC in May 1968 -- for McKissick an intensely personal, emotional experience. "I'm giving you what I am," he recalls telling the NAC when he submitted his proposal. "This is my program. This is me. This is what I believe in. This is what I'm willing to risk my life for, the same as I did when I led

demonstrations. . ."[71]

For the approximately 30 CORE officials in attendance, however, the Baltimore meeting did not hold as much significance or emotion. Many CORE officials focused their attention on other matters, including the nearing convention. Also, CORE remained in turmoil: the meeting reflected the continuing conflict and dialogue between two principal factions within CORE. Thus, the proposal gained much support from those wanting to consolidate Black Power through an economic thrust. "A black city was certainly a way of reflecting that thrust," recalls Ruth Turner Perot, a special assistant to McKissick. In contrast, those still ensconsed within CORE's traditions, which did not include an economic emphasis, expressed less enthusiasm. Roy Innis, McKissick's deputy at the time, remembers the debate between the groups as "pretty heated."[72]

Although McKissick had been talking about his ideas for more than a year, the meeting marked the first formal and full presentation. "Some of us were generally familiar with the idea and felt it was not hairbrained at all." recalls Wilford Ussery, then NAC chairman. Most board members, however, studied the proposal for the first time. "It was the typical reaction of an old board to new proposals," Innis remembers. "They were slow to catch on."[73]

Despite McKissick's impassioned pleas and strong hints that he might leave CORE unless the NAC approved the entire proposal, it did not do so. McKissick recalls that the council felt the proposal was "somewhat conservative" since it required working within existing economic and political institutions. Ussery

contends that CORE's limited resources also played a part. In any case, through unwillingness and inability, the council wavered on land acquisition, a larger and more professional staff and other crucial points. As McKissick recalls: "They accepted about two-thirds of my plan. But the root, the guts of my plan, they did not accept."[74]

While resentment and disappointment largely characterized McKissick at the meeting's end, Innis recalls that the board angered him. "I cursed them out," he remembers. "I was particularly abusive toward them for discussing irrelevant issues instead of dealing with new issues and giving freedom to the director to move ahead."[75]

Rebuffed by CORE and still troubled by back ailments, McKissick notified the NAC that he would immediately take a leave of ~~office~~ absence. "I have never been one who wanted to be head of an organization that was not going in the direction I wanted to go," he recalls.[76] McKissick, then, would move ahead outside CORE. He officially announced his resignation in late June for "medical reasons" just before the 1968 CORE convention in Columbus, Oh.[77] Though the meeting opened with McKissick absent,[78] he did make one appearance for reasons of sentiment and continuity.[79] At a testimonial dinner in his behalf, he gave indications that breaking his bonds with CORE was a difficult, painful task -- perhaps more so than he expected. He told 300 well-wishers he might return. "I might just step aside for a little while but it would make too many white people happy if I leave," he said.[80] Again, when dissident factions walked out of the convention, McKissick said he might not step down until the dispute was

settled.[81] But the dispute reflected deep ideological divisions in CORE, disagreements that McKissick could not hope to bridge.[82]

The split had not healed by the time CORE's convention reconvened in St. Louis two months later. The convention did adopt a new constitution advocating black nationalism and elected Roy Innis as national director, succeeding McKissick.[83]

While CORE disintegrated in the dissension and bickering of St. Louis, McKissick was in North Carolina fulfilling several speaking engagements -- and looking at land.[84] Two weeks earlier, he had formed McKissick Enterprises. Though not yet announced to the public, McKissick Enterprises had as its ultimate goal the development of a new town in the rural South.

NOTES

[1]Floyd McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N.C., 14 October 1983; The New York Times, 25 January 1967, p. 56. McKissick was admitted to Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center with a sciatica condition 24 January 1967.

[2]McKissick interview 14 October 1983; McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N.C., 26 October 1983; The New York Times, 24 June 1966. One June 23, Mississippi highway patrolmen and local police routed 2,500 demonstrators with tear gas. The Times account does not mention McKissick injuring himself, only that McKissick, Martin Luther King Jr. and Stokely Carmichael stood atop a covered van shouting instructions to demonstrators until the tear gas drove them down. McKissick, however, distinctly remembers falling off the trailer, injuring his back. As he recalls, he was about to fall on a little girl, but pushed her out of the way, fell and heard a snap.

[3]McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N.C., 21 September 1983; The New York Post, 25 April 1966, p. 33.

[4]McKissick, interview 21 September 1983; Carlos C. Campbell, New Towns: Another Way to Live (Reston: Reston Publishing Co., 1976), p. 120.

[5]Ibid.

[6]McKissick interview 21 September 1983; The New York Post 25 April 1966, p. 33.

[7]McKissick interview, 21 September 1983.

[8]Current Biography 1968, p. 239.

[9]Current Biography 1968, pp. 239-40; The New York Post, 20 June 1967, p. 48.

[10]Current Biography 1968, p. 241.

[11]McKissick interview, 14 October 1983.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.; McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N.C., 5 October 1983; General Services Administration, National Personnel Records Center. McKissick served in the Army beginning Jan. 13, 1942, arrived in Europe May 18, 1945 and left Nov. 20, 1945. He was honorably dischared on Dec. 3, 1945.

[14]McKissick interview, 14 October 1983.

[15]McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N.C., 7 June 1983; Daniel Pollitt, personal interview, Chapel Hill, N.C., 2 March 1984; Campbell, p. 121.

[16]Ibid.; The North Carolina Fund, Programs and Policies (Durham: The North Carolina Fund, 1963), p. 6, 16; CORE Papers at Martin Luther King Jr. Center For Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, Ga., Acc. No. 6, Subgroup A, Series II, Subset I, Box 18, 72 (hereafter McKissick papers); The N.C. Leadership Conference on Economic Development took place at Shaw University in Raleigh on Nov. 13, 1965. Representatives from the NAACP, CORE, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and other groups also attended. At the conference, McKissick mentioned the idea of cooperative trading posts for farmers.

The North Carolina Fund, a non-profit charitable corporation formed in 1963 by then Gov. Terry Sanford, received an initial $14 million in foundation grants. Its specific functions, as laid out in its charter, were to study the problems involved in improving the education, economic opportunities, living environment and general welfare of North Carolinians and to act as a foundation, supporting community projects and experiments.

[17]August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement 1942-1968 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 293; Fred C. Shapiro, "McKissick's Message on Black Power Never Changes: The Successor to Floyd McKissick May Not Be So Reasonable," The New York Times Magazine, 1 October 1967, p. 32.

[18]Ibid., p. 301.

[19]Meier and Rudwick, p. 412. For incisive personal accounts of changes in the civil rights movement, see James Forman, The Making of Black Revolutionaries (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1972) and Cleveland Sellers, The River of No Return (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1973). For other primary sources, also see Thomas Frazier, ed. Afro American History Primary Sources (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1970) and Howell Raines, My Soul Is Rested (New York: Putnam, 1977).

[20]Ibid., pp. 414-15.

[21]Ibid., pp. 406-409; Shapiro, p. 99; The New York Herald Tribune, 4 January 1966.

[22]Meier and Rudwick, pp. 407-408; Shapiro, p. 99.

[23]Meier and Rudwick, pp. 414-18; Shapiro, pp. 98-100.

[24]McKissick interview, 21 September 1983.

[25]McKissick interview, 14 October 1983.

[26]Meier and Rudwick, pp. 419-420.

[27] Ibid., pp. 420-23.

[28] McKissick interview, 14 October 1983.

[29] McKissick interview, 21 September 1983.

[30] McKissick interview, 14 October 1983; Lyle Fain, telephone interview, Durham to Providence, R.I., 17 October 1983. During McKissick's hospital stay, he regularly consulted with Providence real estate and land developer Irving Fain about his new town ideas. "He was interested in encouraging people with new and interesting ideas unusual enough not to attract conventional support," remembers Lyle Fain of his late father.

[31] McKissick interview, 14 October 1983.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] The Negro Almanac: A Reference Work on the Afro-American, 4th ed. Harry Ploshi and James Williams, eds. (New York: John Wiley Sons, 1983.) pp. 46-47.

[35] McKissick papers, Box 14, 7. "A Black Manifesto: Floyd McKissick Offers Solutions and Programs," p. 9; McKissick papers, Box 15, 52. "A Nation Within A Nation -- CORE's proposal for economic development and control of black areas (An Economic New Deal for the Poor of America -- An Alternative to Chaos)," p. 1, 9. Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta.

[36] Shapiro, pp. 103-104.

[37] McKissick interview, 14 October 1983; The New York Times 9 March 1967, p. 31; The New York Times, 12 May 1967, p. 37. The Metropolitan Applied Research Center was formed in March 1967 in Manhattan under the leadership of sociologist Kenneth Clark. The center, funded primarily by the Ford Foundation, was designed to influence social and political decisions by government officials for the urban poor.

[38] Harvey H. Kaiser, The Building of Cities: Development and Conflict (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 17.

[39] David C. Thorns, The Quest for Community: Social Aspects of Residential Growth (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976), pp. 64-65.

[40] Hugh Mields, Federally Assisted New Communities: New Dimensions in Urban Development (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Land Institute, 1973), p. 8.

[41] Ibid., p. 11.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow A New World: The New Deal Community Program (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959; reprint ed., New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), p. 331.

[44]Mields, p. 13.

[45]Conkin, pp. 6-11.

[46]Ibid., pp. 186-88.

[47]Ibid., p. 200.

[48]Ibid., p. 214.

[49]Ibid., p. 327.

[50]Ibid., p. 331.

[51]August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), pp. 146-48.

[52]Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), p. 48.

[53]Meier, pp. 146-48. Whitesboro, N.J. was founded by a group of North Carolinians under the leadership of George White, the last black to represent the state in Congress. Mound Bayou, Mississippi was founded in 1887 by Isaiah Montgomery, a former slave of Confederate President Jefferson Davis' brother.

[54]H. Wayne Morgan and Anne Hodges Morgan, Oklahoma: A Bicentennial History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 62.

[55]Meier, p. 148.

[56]William Loren Katz, The Black West (Garden City: Doubleday 1971), pp. 249-60; see also W. Sherman Savage, Blacks in the West (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), pp. 101-3.

[57]Katz, p. 313.

[58]Ibid., p. 317.

[59]Meier, p. 105.

[60]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[61]McKissick interview, 5 October 1983.

[62]Meier, pp. 148-49.

[63]Morgan and Morgan, . 62.

[64]Katz, pp. 249-52.

[65]Thorns, p. 72.

[66]Ibid., pp. 90-92; G. Tyler Miller, ed., Living in the Environment (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 1982), p. E109.

[67]Mields, pp. 14-24; ~~Carlos C.~~ Campbell, p. 5, 20.

[68]McKissick interview, 26 October 1983.

[69]The Negro Almanac, p. 49; Campbell, p. 7.

[70]The New York Times, 5 April 1968, p. 1; The Negro Almanac, p. 50.

[71]McKissick interview, 26 October 1983.

[72]Ibid.; Ruth Turner Perot, telephone interview, Durham to Washington, D.C., 23 March 1984; Roy Innis, telephone interview, Durham to New York, 26 March 1984. CORE's written records thin out markedly during the late 1960s and McKissick's term as national director. Innis says: "The movement was like a war. There was no time to document everything." In any case, no written record of this meeting seems to exist.

[73]Ibid.; Wilford Ussery, telephone interview, Durham to San Francisco, 27 March 1984.

[74]Ibid.

[75]McKissick interview, 26 October 1983; Innis interview.

[76]Ibid.

[77]The New York Times, 26 June 1968, p. 33.

[78]The New York Times, 4 July 1968, p. 8; The Columbus Dispatch, 4 July 1968, p. 1B.

[79]McKissick interview, 26 October 1983.

[80]Ibid.; The Columbus Dispatch, 5 July 1968, p. 4A.

[81]The Columbus Dispatch, 8 July 1968, p. 1A; The New York Times, 8 July 1968, p. 1.

[82]The New York Times, 8 July 1968, p. 1; Meier and Rudwick, pp. 423-24.

[83]The New York Times, 17 September 1968, p. 20.

[84]McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N.C., 14 December 1983; The New York Amsterdam News, 5 October 1968, p. 1.

[85]McKissick interview, 14 October 1983.

CHAPTER TWO

GENESIS

> "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."
>
> -- Genesis 2:7[1]

I

Floyd McKissick formed McKissick Enterprises on August 23, 1968.[2] A scant four-and-a-half months later, he stood alongside Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman and first publicly announced plans for a new town in the rural South to be called Soul City.[3] In June of 1972, Soul City received life with a $14 million federal loan guarantee.[4]

In those hectic years, McKissick altered his original vision -- by choice and by necessity -- and in sometimes fundamental ways. When McKissick left CORE for his firm, the notion of starting Soul City from a core group of farms and trading posts still held prominence.[5] These farming communities, he envisioned, would develop one at a time and eventually spawn a town -- Soul City. Then, tempted by the fates of history, he expanded his vision beyond the area's native population to include large numbers of settlers -- 18,000 on about 2,000 acres.[6] Ultimately, he envisioned a city of 50,000 on 5,000 acres -- a prospect encouraged by both private and public consultants and planners.[7] Soul City's transformation during its very genesis determined much of its future.

His original vision, however, remained steadfast in important respects. He continued his advocacy of constructive black power: "There are two concepts of black power. One of them to tear down, burn down, destroy. The other is to get involved in economics, in politics, in government, in the whole fabric of life. Blacks now understand the second one. You kick down a door and then you find you're not able to do anything inside; you've got no skills, no knowledge, no expertise." And McKissick saw his new town idea as something of a culmination of the civil rights struggle which dominated much of his life -- a community that would bring together blacks and whites on an equal basis but would also demonstrate blacks' capacity to succeed in vast projects such as new towns.[8]

II

McKissick Enterprises began operations in Harlem with high hopes and a rather eclectic collection of programs. As McKissick reported a year later, the "first few months we spent in putting together the skeleton of an organization -- and dreaming." More than anything else, the dreaming and planning focused on the new town.[9] McKissick, himself, spoke of moving to a different part of the civil rights struggle. "I feel that my best service to the movement and to my people can be rendered by my full-time commitment to Black economic independence," he said in announcing the firm's formation. "If a Black man has no bread in his pocket -- the solution to his problem is not integration; it's to get some bread. Real simple -- that's what McKissick Enterprises is all about."[10]

McKissick Enterprises operated under the red, black and green flag of 1920s entrepreneur and black nationalist Marcus Garvey. In a McKissick book published in 1969, he revealed some of the reasons why. McKissick lauded Garvey, "an unabashed capitalist who endeavored to advance his people through business and free enterprise," because undoubtedly he shared some of Garvey's acumen and aspired to Garvey's dynamism.[11] He also shared many of Garvey's views. Though McKissick endorsed an economic emphasis to civil rights, he wrote: "Colored and Black People know that racism and capitalism are so entwined as to be inseparable. And they know that they are the victims."[12] Thus, he called for the entire economic system to be revamped, but through meaningful participation and sharing by blacks and other excluded people.[13] Even then, he argued, the "Black People will not be satisfied while their Black and colored brothers still suffer from colonialism and oppression."[14] Clearly, McKissick defied any attempts at categorization.

Within this context, McKissick reiterated his case for a new town, possibly on government-owned land and definitely with government and private assistance. "Revolutions have invariably been fought for the equitable redistribution of land, wealth and power. America now has the opportunity. . .without accompanying bloodshed."[1

McKissick Enterprises, modeled somewhat on Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association, offered services ranging from technical assistance to consulting expertise.[16] The company distinguished itself from others by emphasizing that its major objectives were "social rather than pecuniary," though it also recognized that its social goals would be "obtained only to the

extent" that it prospered and was able to reinvest and distribute profits.[17]

Within the predominantly white-controlled economic system, a company "dedicated to the building of Black economic power" found many outlets for its energies. In the early lists of prospective projects, the as-yet unnamed new town ranked below a public relations firm, Black Top restaurants, clubs, stores, shopping centers and a publishing house. Ventures such as ginger beer and "Harlem Delight Coffee," whiskey and hot sauce distribution merited prominence just below that of the new town.[18] The company, McKissick recalls, did not want to announce the new town prematurely while it still did not own the land. "It was never -- by no stretch of the imagination -- behind" the other projects, he remembers. "That was our ultimate point of concentration."[19]

Though outwardly not the focus of McKissick Enterprises activity perhaps, the new town took much of its founder's attention. McKissick shuttled between New York and North Carolina to look at several promising tracts of land, located near Wilson, Roanoke Rapids and in New Hanover County, among others. In the summer of 1968 McKissick contacted his protege T. T. Clayton, who first met McKissick as a law student at North Carolina Central University in the 1950s. Clayton, by then a lawyer based in Warrenton, scouted land as McKissick's North Carolina contact and happened upon the 1,810-acre Satterwhite farm in Warren County. "As far as I know, this was the only tract with potential for new town development because of its size," Clayton recalls. He contacted the owner, Leon Perry, who indicated he might sell,

and then notified McKissick, who studied the site closely.[20]

If there ever was land that needed life breathed into it, it was Warren County and the surrounding area. In a poor state, the five-county region, marked by old-line industries like textiles and food and tobacco processing, was one of the poorest. Warren County ranked in the bottom ten counties in wealth in a state that ranked in the bottom ten nationally. Per capita income in 1966, about $2,300 for North Carolina, was less than $1,000 for the region. And that statistic reflected an improvement. Seven years earlier, more than half of all families and 82 percent of non-white families fell below the federal poverty level of $1,000 income per year.[21]

The poverty was partly the legacy of slavery. In 1800, Warren County ranked as the only North Carolina county with more slaves than free men and women. A century ago, Warrenton, the county seat, was one of the state's most important towns, and because of cotton, tobacco and slaves one of the wealthiest. In those days, Warrenton gave the state four governors, six attorneys general, three Supreme Court justices and at least five tobacco magnates. The Civil War, however, changed the county forever, leaving behind the small farms and sharecroppers. The agricultural decline and labor surplus familiar to much of the South found full expression here. As one resident said: "The tractor has done away with the mule, and mules have done away with cotton pickers."[22] The Warren County site, itself, stood on the former Satterwhite Plantation. In the early 1960s the Perry Lumber Co. stripped the land of timber. Some cattle also grazed on the land, but by the late '60s, the only sign of the

land's past grandeur was the antebellum mansion.[23]

Understandably, many Warren County residents, without hope and faced with pervasive poverty and one of three alternatives -- "Heaven, Hell and Baltimore" -- chose the latter.[24] During the 1960s Warren County's white population declined from 6,739 to 6,092. In marked contrast, black population dipped 25 percent from 12,306 to 9,035.[25] Reporters and public officials recognized Warren County's outmigration problem -- one that afflicted North Carolina and much of the rural South -- around the time McKissick formulated plans for Soul City. In May 1969, reporter Dwayne Walls moved into the little black community of Mayflower, about 13 miles south of Warrenton. After a month, Walls could describe the migration pattern poignantly. They went to Baltimore and other northern cities by train on the Chickenbone Special that went past the Soul City site and on the interstate highways in search of the Promised Land.[26] Most did not find it as "gradually it became clear that Baltimore and Hell often were the same place." The older people first carried the word back; then the word came back in the battered spirit of youngsters. But still people migrated north.[27]

That continuing migration worried other North Carolinians who thought that blacks who migrated north and ended up in the urban ghettoes might return south, and that it would benefit both the return migrants and the state. George Autry, president of the N. C. Manpower Development Corp., a North Carolina Fund spin-off supported by the Office of Economic Opportunity and the National Association of Manufacturers, suggested that it was possible and practical to help disillusioned blacks in the

northern slums return to better jobs and brighter futures in their native South. During the peak of migration, upwards of 350,000 people, mostly black, left North Carolina for the North. The one-way flow continued through the '60s. Thus, "concentrating national manpower resources exclusively in the ghettoes of the 50 largest cities is so idiotic," Autry told the N. C. Association of Editorial Writers. "It makes absolutely no sense to spend everything in Washington, D.C. creating jobs for the rural poor who have come North while spending nothing in Washington, N.C. helping prevent the rural poor from continuing to come north." Autry further suggested the first comprehensive effort in U. S. history to reverse the migration pattern. He told the editorial writers that he was "reliably informed. . .that many former North Carolinians yearn for such an opportunity to return. We suspect that such a movement would be catching." Autry proposed Project Homeward Bound as a pilot program and study involving 100 former North Carolinians in Washington, D.C.[28]

Autry, who first met McKissick during the 1960s sit-ins, discussed his ideas about stemming the tide and even reversing migration with McKissick during 1968. "I do not claim Soul City as an idea," Autry recalls, "but Floyd was aware of the project." Autry endorsed the idea of new cities as relocation points for return migrants as "cross fertilization" of ideas occurred during the early planning stages.[29] One of McKissick's advisers later wrote Autry: "It seems to me that the Manpower Development Corp. and Soul City are perfect mates; especially your 'Homeward Bound' program."[30] Autry's plan partly legitimized the vision of McKissick, himself a return migrant. McKissick, himself, at

least partly recognized the incipient return migration trend. Meetings at the Harlem YMCA, across the street from McKissick Enterprises, and at the nearby headquarters of the Daughters and Sons of North Carolina convinced him of the possibility. "They anticipated that the South would not be like it was in the past," he recalls.[31] The observations of journalists and public officials and the strivings of migrants perhaps indeed homeward bound shaped and changed McKissick's vision.

Warren County's reality of poverty and migration, though, fit McKissick's vision almost perfectly. The available site in a predominantly black area with the possibility of return migration ended McKissick's search for such a depressed area, albeit one with future promise. The site held enormous potential exactly because of its location within an impoverished area. A sense of purpose overrode logic. Throughout his life, McKissick had sought out and met challenges, for himself and on the behalf of blacks in general. If a black man, the son of a bellhop, could succeed here, it would mean and show much more than accomplishment in more favorable circumstances. "We knew there was nothing there," McKissick recalls. "That was our object of being there. It was desolate." McKissick also knew the area well from the 1950s voting rights drives, when he formulated the trading post idea. The specific Warren County site also met other significant criteria, perhaps not as connected to McKissick's vision. A new town built there would be free-standing -- apart from any major urban center. The site also had access to a major highway (Interstate 85) and a major railroad (Seaboard Coastline). Bordering tracts, owned by absentee owners, might be purchased

later. And the tract appealed to McKissick's sense of justice. "I have wanted this land for a long time," he once said. "It belonged to the family of a state legislator that fought integration like a tiger. This was the only place I ever wanted to build Soul City."[32]

On return to New York after one trip to the Warren County site, several McKissick Enterprises staff members commented that they "were going to build a city with soul and compassion." The notion, with its cultural, religious and political connotations, stuck. "The staff started referring to it as our city -- Soul City," McKissick remembers.[33]

Meanwhile, McKissick Enterprises, with each passing month, increasingly focused its energies on Soul City. With McKissick Enterprises' limited capital and staff, the various other projects necessarily took on less importance. Energies and resources could more effectively be applied to a single project. "We were attempting to spread ourselves too thin," McKissick recalls. McKissick's right-hand man, Gordon Carey, recalls that the Soul City emphasis happened "simply because of the enormity of the project. . .it was apparent that Soul City was going to take the full-time effort and energies of all of us, plus every other bit of time we could drag into this thing." None of the other proposals, too, held the vision or the possibility of immense achievement and, in the process, profit. Countless other firms, including some black-controlled companies, distributed goods, offered consulting services and the like and competed with McKissick Enterprises. The building of a shining new city from the ground up -- now that appealed to the grandeur-seeking

traits of McKissick and his associates and involved few competitors. Also, the other projects might once again arise once the city gained life.[34] It "became obvious that this project was going to overwhelm our small and already overburdened staff," he reported a year later. The firm purchased an option on the 1,810-acre farm tract for $390,000; by early 1969 the company's focus was decided. "It was determined. . .that we would invest a great part of our organizational effort into this one project. Secondly it was determined that any new projects would have to have a direct bearing on the success of Soul City."[35]

Other developments seemed to validate McKissick's vision and his firm's chosen direction. Ervin Galantay, an architectural critic and educator, proposed black new towns as the "fourth" and best alternative to the urban crisis. Rather than continuing current programs, pursuing "ghetto enrichment" or integrating the suburbs, Galantay argued, policymakers should recognize that "above all, the Negroes want to control their own destinies." Efforts of ghetto improvement could accompany a "program to create new communities where Negroes can be masters of their own life and shape their own environment." All managerial and decision making positions would be staffed by blacks, he wrote, and he suggested that one or two towns could be built on federal lands as experiments. "These towns would not in themselves solve the urban problem," Galantay concluded. "However, they would offer a partial solution, a solution that is within the reach of the Negro community. Life in the Black new towns may not be perfect and their economy may fail eventually, like Marcus Garvey's Black Star Steamship line. On the other hand,

to paraphrase James Rouse, they may provide the 'most viable soil for the growth of the black people.'"[36] McKissick certainly shared many, if not all, of those sentiments. "We're going to go after this land now," McKissick remembers telling his firm's 15 or so employees. "And if we get this land straightened out in the next year, we're going to be on site. If we can maintain a New York office, we'll try to maintain one, but if it requires that all of us go down to North Carolina and put this thing together, that's what we're going to have to do."[37]

With a site in mind and a name in hand, McKissick moved to more difficult and more pressing matters. "We were trying to line up as much help as we could get," he remembers of this harried time, "and we touched base with as many companies, associations, colleges, schools and universities to form a consortium to help us develop the new town."[38] McKissick met with Robert Simon, developer of Reston, Va., and James Rouse, the man behind Columbia, Md., among others.

Despite the assistance, one major stumbling block remained: money. McKissick approached Chase Manhattan and North Carolina National banks, among others. The former ultimately approved a $200,000 loan for the land option. Close friend Irving Fain, who visited McKissick often during the 1967 hospital stay to discuss new towns, also contributed $200,000. "Between Chase and Iving J. Fain, that really gave me a start to go forward," McKissick recalled. ". . .(W)hen our outline of preliminary plans went out to them, they immediately backed me." Yet, despite this support, it soon became clear that McKissick could not finance Soul City wholly from the private sector.[39] McKissick did not

have trusted friends like Chase Manhattan's Nelson Rockefeller at other major banks that might make a favorable decision on a loan application. Despite the ostensibly favorable climate for black entrepreneurs, well-placed friends remained a necessity. "At that time, there was a realization that blacks were not participating in the economic mainstream and many companies announced they were going to do things," McKissick recalls. ". . .they did not follow through." Also, McKissick needed more than the $500,000 or so he had managed to extract from private sources; new town development required funds a quantum leap beyond -- in the millions. "The view that I had, at least, was that it was only feasible with government support," recalls Carey. "The amount of money that was required to front-end the project couldn't have been mounted and couldn't have been done without government support." Faced with such obstacles and realities, McKissick looked gradually toward government, which presented him with encouraging signs earlier in August.[40] On August 1, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. Title IV of the act guaranteed bonds, debentures and notes of private new community developers and included assistance in the development of new community facilities through supplementary grants.[41] The prospects for funds from other agencies -- the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare -- appeared good, too. In sum, the possibility of significant federal support existed. McKissick settled on a move for government, yet he did not make this crucial decision without some hesitancy and without much deliberation. He realized that he might lose some measure of

independence once he began depending on government for financial life. From his civil rights experience, McKissick also knew that unwieldy bureaucracies might ruin the timing so important to his project, impose difficult rules and threaten to bury him with paperwork. And he recognized that public funding necessarily subjected him to increased scrutiny. "I had doubts," he recalls. "We knew we were going to have difficulties with the government." McKissick received advice on both sides. Rouse and Simon, for example, discouraged federal involvement in Soul City. McKissick recounts: "There were many who said, 'Now if you can maneuver it without the government, so much so the better.'"[42]

But, in the end, hard realities and the counsel of old friend and McKissick Enterprises board of directors member Irving Fain prevailed. "I was not the Rouse Company," Fain, who loaned the firm more than $250,000, convinced McKissick. "I was not a developer comparable to the status of Rouse." After McKissick took the option on the Soul City tract, several "real uptight" meetings ensued with Fain and other supporters. These meetings convinced McKissick of the necessity of government help. "It was then that it was decided that that would be the best way to go," he recalls.[43]

The first stop for McKissick and Soul City within the federal bureaucracy was the Department of Agriculture. Hearkening back to his trading post idea, McKissick initially thought of starting Soul City from a core group of farms. McKissick and his staff would teach the farmers to farm and market independently. These farming communities, he envisioned, would develop one at a time and eventually spawn a town -- Soul City. Thus, he took his

idea first to the Department of Agriculture's Farmers Home Administration.[44] The beginnings of a crucial pattern first emerge here. McKissick utilized the influence of a sympathetic and influential administrator to bring Soul City to the attention of an otherwise plodding, perhaps inattentive, bureaucracy. McKissick's contact here, William Seabron, held the post of special assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture. McKissick first met Seabron when both were in the NAACP as young lawyers. They shared interests in rural develpment as well as civil rights. While McKissick waged his civil rights struggle in the courts and on the streets, Seabron moved into government. He served as deputy director of the Michigan Fair Employment Practices Commission from 1956 to 1962. After his appointment as departmental assistant in the Department of Agriculture in February 1965, Seabron worked closely with various government agencies to ensure compliance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Both shared interests drew old friends together once again when Seabron found himself in government and McKissick discovered himself approaching the government for assistance.[45]

Seabron continually brought McKissick to the attention of Orville Freeman, his superior during the fall of 1968. "It would be my judgment that if possible you should see him," Seabron advised Freeman. "He is one of the few outstanding Negro leaders in the civil rights field -- I think it might be useful for bothhim and you."[46] Seabron sent Freeman at least four more memoranda before year's end.[47]

III

January 13, 1969 dawned bright in Washington, D.C.; the sun glinted off the last traces of snow on the ground. In the sun-brightened office of Secretary of Agriculture, reporters and television cameras surrounded two men: Orville Freeman and Floyd McKissick.[48] Together, they unveiled plans for Soul City with a projected population of 18,000. Freeman promised his department's "complete support" and then introduced McKissick, who spoke of his hopes and dreams for Soul City, which he said would become "a source of inspiration to blacks throughout the country."[49] "We do not intend to adopt the white man's racism," he said. "The black man has been searching for his identity and destiny in the cities. He should be able to find it on the plains of Warren County."[50] Similar hopes stirred in the souls of many black North Carolinian expatriates. On New York City's lower East Side, the announcement sent ripples of excitement through the exile community there. Black children and white social workers took up sidewalk collections for the new city. Across the nation, the news electrified former Warren County black residents, who had a fast and effective way of keeping up with news from back home. Ernest Turner, a Warren County store owner, immediately received letters like one from a supermarket manager in Washington, D.C. who had left Warren County eight years earlier. The manager pleaded for a chance to return home and open a supermarket in Soul City. McKissick's mail, too, was flooded with such pleas; he also received personal visits. A subsequent block-by-block survey of sections of Harlem revealed hundreds of former Southerners eager to move into Soul City and willing to

enroll in job training programs, if necessary, to get there.[51] The reaction back in Warren County, though, was less enthusiastic.

McKissick's announcement took local officials completely by surprise. Amos Capps, chairman of the Warren County commissioners, for instance, said: "(I)t did come as a shock to me to learn that a project of this magnitude was being considered without the knowledge of county officials."[52] Both Frank Reams, executive director of the County Industrial Development Industrial Commission, and Warrenton Mayor W. A. Miles also expressed surprise at the news. T. T. Clayton, A McKissick associate and Warrenton attorney who took the option on the land, explained why country officials were not informed: "I didn't want to create any opposition," he said. "There was no reasons. It was a business transaction."[53]

The announcement also undoubtedly shocked the former owner, Leon Perry, who probably would have asked a higher price had he known the land was destined for Soul City. "I attempted to purchase the property without fully divulging its use," Clayton recalls. "I did not indicate what the property would be used for" though he said that "the slope of the land would make a beautiful golf course."[54] McKissick took the first official step toward constructing Soul City when he filed the deed on February 21.[55]

Among county residents, also startled by the announement, skepticism and fear marked much of the initial reaction. Bignall Jones, editor of the weekly Warren Record, likened the first response to those of "Henny Penny" who thought the sky was falling. "A lot of folks went around saying the county was going to be ruined, that the white folks were going to have to leave," he told a reporter. "There's a lot of doubt" that Soul City will

materialize, he said. "I doubt it myself."[56]

"It seems that there are still a significant number of whites who find it hard to accept the blacks as anything more than menial or farm laborers," said the director of the demonstration regional and new community project of the N. C. Department of Administration's State Planning Division. "The possibility that a city might be built by black-managed capital and skill appears to be beyond the comprehension of many in the region." The director also said: "indifferent comments such as 'the black folks are free to do anything they want' or 'we have nothing against Soul City' typified the extent of positive support for Soul City on the part of many civic and community leaders in the region."[57] Some county residents expressed outright hostility. Perry, who sold the property, received numerous threats and left the county for several days until things calmed down.[58]

Behind the public view, though, McKissick moved to mobilize support, primarily within the black community. Before the announcement in Washington, only about 40 Warrent County residents knew of Soul City. "When we announced that we had acquired the land we started mobilizing support," McKissick remembers. "We could not mobilize support without the land." After the announcement, he held a number of meetings in Soul City's Old Red Barn, in addition to black churches, fraternal lodges and the like.[59] In all the meetings, McKissick took care not to make unwise promises. "They have suffered disappointment so often," he said, "it's imperative that we get our thing going before we offer it to them."[60] McKissick saw few similarities to the early civil rights movement and voter registration drives. For instance, his

reputation made recruitment difficult rather than easier. "Who you were was an enigma," he recalls. McKissick used some of the same techniques, relying on young support, and initially encountered many of the same obstacles, including an entrenched white power structure led by Amos Capps, chairman of the Warren County commissioners. "His influence was a power," he recalls. "Everyone said that Amos Capps is going to get you."[61]

On the political side, McKissick said that the state had a "political climate which is conducive to official cooperation."[62] Some North Carolina observers, however, questioned the separatist connotations of Soul City. Such efforts, wrote Claude Sitton, editor of The News and Observer, were spawned by "a sickness that infects both parent and offspring" and showed their sponsors' "desperation." Sitton contrasted McKissick's initiative with NAACP leader Roy Wilkins' call for black studies, which had "none of the rejection, the defeatism and the withdrawal" that he felt characterized Soul City.[63] Other North Carolina newspapers, most notably The Charlotte Observer, focused on the spirit and dreams behind Soul City. One article imagined the arrival of the 18,000th resident -- George Grimes, a machinist who had left Warren County for Baltimore 20 years before -- and "the fruition of a dream." Grimes epitomized one group of Soul City settlers; others arrived from rural North Carolina. Another article emphasized that McKissick was going back to the soil for solutions.[64] Nationally, the Soul City announcement spurred scattered response; few black leaders commented publicly. One who did, Stephen Wright, president of the United Negro College Fund, said of Soul City: "That, too, is just another ruse to disappoint and

delude the ignorant."[65] The announcement also provoked much reaction in Washington circles. Many North Carolina and other congressmen found themselves confronted with requests from constituents for Soul City information.[66] Congressmen also received comments, many misinformed, that ranged from the supportive to the condemnatory to the emotional, but that all reflected the prominence and notoriety of Soul City from the start. Otha Warren, Jr. of North Little Rock, Ark., for example, wrote Rep. David Pryor, D-Ark., that he did "not feel that the Negro race is entitled to use my tax dollars to build a segregated city. Segregation is the one thing they have fought against and now the Government is contributing to the construction of a monumental insult to the nation."[67] Soul City, from the beginning, intrigued city planners. McKissick's town, one planner wrote, "comes perhaps closer than any other in the country to interpreting the intent of Congress as set in the new communities act of 1968." "The project," the planner continued, "will provide a test for an innovative economic system which, if successful, could inspire similar enterprises across the country and possibly bring millions of poor Americans into the capitalistic mainstream."[68] Clearly, though, the first news of Soul City did not meet with unequivocal favor. Opposition arose from several different quarters.

IV

Meanwhile, McKissick continued his efforts to gain assistance from all sectors, including academia. In this effort, McKissick utilized two important connections at the University of North Carolina: law professor Daniel Pollitt, a colleague since the

mid-1950s, and John Parker, chairman of the Department of City and Regional Planning. McKissick contacted Pollitt almost immediately. By February 13, Pollitt told McKissick: "It's good working with you again. . ." Pollitt told fellow law professors about Soul City and the assistance they could render in their areas of expertise. He then scheduled a March 10 conference with McKissick Enterprises representatives to "explore some of the legal problems that undoubtedly lie ahead." Among the legal areas: real estate, commercial, corporate and municipal corporations. The handful of law faculty were liberal; "they were people interested in helping," he remembers. "At first, there was a great deal of enthusiasm and there was money, some big grants. And there were a lot of legal problems." On March 21 and 22, Pollitt, and Project Homeward Bound deviser Autry, attended a McKissick Enterprises-sponsored planning conference in Warren County.[69]

Parker offered his department's resources to McKissick. "Parker may have just done it," recalls David Godschalk, then a professor in the department, but no faculty opposed the move. Four days after the initial announcement, McKissick and his staff met department faculty. "McKissick was speaking of concept and philosophy," one witness said, "while the planners were questioning financing, timing and strategy."[70] The resources included a second-year graduate course taught by Godschalk -- an "opportunity to work with a real situation within North Carolina together with a dynamic and idealistic individual." Three teams of students took three different approaches to Soul City's development. The team emphasizing market objectives and the mixed objective team

realized nice profits and were adaptable to change. The team focusing on social objectives, in contrast, found themselves in financial trouble, unable to respond to changes.[71]

Events moved quickly after news of Soul City first reached the public. On January 18, McKissick announced that New York architects Ifill, Johnson and Hanchard would help plan and design Soul City.[72] The next week, several of McKissick's colleagues met with N. C. Gov. Robert Scott, who pledged that Soul City would receive the same help from the state than any other municipality would receive. T. T. Clayton, who led the delegation, called the meeting "very successful" in its purpose "to discuss how the state can benefit from and help the development of Soul City."[73]

McKissick's ventures into the federal bureaucracy, in contrast, met with decidedly mixed results, as he left the Department of Agriculture as the major funding agency. McKissick, with the help of government officials, discovered the New Communities Program, created in 1968. The officials prodded an already-interested McKissick toward the Department of Housing and Urban Development which supervised the new town program. McKissick first made contact with HUD officials in December 1968 through an intermediary.[74] In January, McKissick met with Robert Paul, director of the Land and Facilities Development Administration, which directed the new communities division.[75] Later that month, McKissick wrote Paul, expressing interest in HUD's "authority to guarantee -- a loan needed for preliminary development of new communities and the necessary land acquisition."[76]

Soul City differed in important ways from every other new

town application sent to HUD. No other new town had a black primary developer. No other new town planned to begin in a rural area, separated from any metropolitan area. HUD officials recognized those ditinctions immediately. ". . .this project cannot be treated as an ordinary case; it has implications of national and international importance," stated the May 1969 preliminary project review. "We must use it creatively."[77] Thus, Soul City's unique traits afforded special attention. The differences, however, also led to special problems and scrutiny.

From the very beginning, HUD officials expressed concern about Soul City's possibly separatist nature. Paul Brace, said in the initial December meeting that he made it clear "that the Department would not support a segregated Black community no more than it would support a segregated white one."[78] HUD officials, concerned with the image evoked by Soul City and worried that the name "could cause it to become, in fact, a Black city, with token white integration," suggested internally that the project be renamed in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. or given "some other name that appealed to black pride and white respect." "This would establish Soul City, not as a precedent for Black separatism, as it might become, but as a preliminary experiment leading to a true multi-racial program of new community development," stated the May 1969 preliminary project review. In October 1969, Brace, by then director of HUD's new communities branch, evoked the racial question as the reason no federal aid had been yet committed. Because officials viewed Soul City as all-black and as a "specialized" experiment, HUD disavowed interest. "We're trying to move away from specialization," Brace explained.

"We haven't provided any funds for company towns, or education town and a new town for blacks has to be thought of as specialized."[79] A memorandum, never sent to McKissick, proposed that a partnership with a white developer be encouraged to further a biracial image.[80]

From the beginning, too, McKissick and his staff offered assurances that Soul City would be open to all.[81] But behind the facade of assurances, McKissick and his staff also worried about negative consequences caused by the name. McKissick asked Washington consultants Hammer, Greene, Siler and Associates for advice. Should the name "Soul City" be dropped, he asked, because the name might increase political resistance and hinder industrial development. If so, should the town be rechristened with a typically American name, named after an African city, a deceased black leader or the developer himself, McKissick asked. Or, should the name be retained because of advantages engendered by its racial identifiability.[82] The consultants replied that the name "Soul City" should ultimately be dropped, though for the time being, McKissick should "play it for all it's worth." Jettisoning such a highly symbolic name could appear as capitulation to the establishment, the consultants stated. Though the name handicapped recruitment efforts; "on the other hand, there is no use trying to hide what Soul City is all about and the very use of the name 'Soul City' is a good way to lay it on the line."[83] Publicly, McKissick did just that. "All my life I've worked to keep my brothers from having to compromise what they believe to accomodate the Man," he said in a planning magazine. "I believe in Soul City. If I change the name, I will have lived my life

for nothing."[84] McKissick never changed the name.

HUD officials also worried about the inexperience of McKissick and his staff in matters of real estate, land development or any major phase of building a complex new community. The concern over developer capability, raised in the very first contact with McKissick in 1969, received strong emphasis in a preliminary project review.[85] Also, HUD officers expressed concern regarding the economic and financial feasibility of the project. Within this area of anxiety, the need for employment merited the most attention of all.[86] And, political opposition to Soul City caused worry among HUD administrators. Though it was difficult to measure the amount of political pressure surrounding Soul City, one HUD official recalled almost constant inquiries surrounded the application, in meetings with Nixon staff members and N. C. Gov. Scott and others, in contrast to other proposals.[87] Interestingly, the local congressional delegation almost unanimously opposed Soul City in its formative stages; all at least expressed some hestitations. Rep. L. H. Fountain, D-N.C., who counted Warren County residents among his constituents, reported several letters of dissent and his own reservations.[88] Sen. Sam Ervin, D-N.C., put his opposition in more clear, forceful terms. He expressed concern that all costs for the project would come from taxes, and that all the profits would benefit McKissick. "Manifestly, the taxpayers of the United States ought not be called upon to finance directly or indirectly any such plans," Ervin wrote in urging HUD to refuse approval.[89] Among other congressmen, outside North Carolina, however, Soul City drew some support. Sen. Jacob Javits, D-N.Y., Rep. Richard Ottinger, D-N.Y., and

Rep. Donald Riegle, D-Mich., among others conveyed their support to HUD administrators.[90]

McKissick and Paul met again in early February 1969; McKissick received some encouraging notes. "(W)e are very interested in the basic concept of Soul City, (which) seems to us may well provide an unusual opportunity for seeing what can be done in applying (the concerns of poverty and rural economic development) in a concrete situation offering promise of real benefit to many thousands of people."[91]

Also for the first time, Samuel Jackson entered the scene. The prominent role played by Jackson in HUD's involvement with Soul City continues one of the recurring themes of this story. McKissick, friends with people of influence within government from his civil rights days, naturally gravitated toward them when Soul City dominanted his agenda. McKissick and Jackson first met at the 1953 NAACP convention. "Our friendship struck off from the beginning," McKissick recalls. Both young lawyers, McKissick and Jackson stayed in touch, through fraternal organizations and the like. During the 1960s they moved in the same circles. McKissick guided CORE through transitions in the civil rights movement; Jackson sat on both the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and NAACP's national board of directors and legal committee. When President Richard Nixon appointed Jackson assistant secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, he ranked as the highest black in federal government.[92] When McKissick went to HUD for assistance, and particularly when Jackson became general manager of HUD's New Community Development Corporation, the friendship proved crucial.[93]

On April 2, 1969, McKissick formally submitted the first proposal to HUD. A letter to Jackson accompanied the proposal. "The development of Soul City is the greatest challenge of my lifetime," it read in part. "I am convinced that it can be one of the most valuable contributions that Black people can make toward constructing the America of tomorrow."[94] When McKissick and longtime associate Gordon Carey approached HUD in the summer of 1969, few staff people took McKissick seriously. He expected and relied on Jackson's support, in lieu of the slick graphics and substantive reports possessed by other developers.[95] Jackson's special assistant at the time remembers her superior as "very supportive" and "enthusiastic" with no qualms about Soul City.[96]

Over the next three years, McKissick and Jackson corresponded regularly, culminating in HUD's offer of $14 million in loan guarantees in June 1972, signed by Jackson himself. Their relationship, carried through the letters, was strained at times, mostly friendly and at all times revealing of McKissick's experience in HUD. When McKissick met bureaucratic obstacles, he relied on Jackson, sometimes bypassing normal channels entirely.

A May 1969 letter asked for more detailed information from McKissick, but indicated that the project "my well eventually be eligible" for a loan guarantee.[97] In August, Jackson wrote McKissick to indicate that, since no new information had been received, HUD was in no better position to evaluate the project.[98] The same month, though, McKissick submitted an economic model, developed with the help of University of North Carolina planners.[99] August, too, marked the first anniversary of McKissick Enterprises'

founding. The preceding year had seen the elevation of Soul City and the firm's simultaneous meteoric rise. The company had increased its assets from a few thousand dollars to more than $1 million, and the financial future looked bright. With plans for Soul City expanding -- projections now called for a town of 67,000 people on 5,000 acres developed over three consecutive five-year periods -- the treasurer Irving McCaine reported that the firm could reap at least $24 million in profits from its "number one priority" if all went well. "We are on the threshhold of a new decade," the treasurer concluded. "During the next 16 years, McKissick Enterprises' role in the world will become important. As we enter the next decade, our major assets will be the professional dedication of our employees, the goodwill of the Black community and the loyalty of our investors."[100]

The board of directors apparently shared the treasurer's enthusiasm; it authorized the firm to pursue $3 million for developing Soul City.[101] At the same meeting, McKissick presented his summary of his progeny's existence concentrated on Soul City. "On every front we have made substantial progress toward mounting this project," he told the board members. McKissick laid out an optimistic timetable and expressed optimism generally. With sufficient operating and planning funds, he told the board, detailed planning would begin within the next month and construction by late 1970 or early 1971. "No city such as this has every been built before," he conceded. "No company as small as ours has ever attempted of such immense complexity. However, I am optimistic."[102] Government administrators did not share the level of McKissick's optimism. By June 1970,

McKissick reported to his board of directors a $200,000 loan from the Chase Manhattan Bank to cover operating expenses. His target date for securing a loan guarantee from HUD -- October.[103] In November, HUD officials reiterated their concern about the ignorance of McKissick and his staff in regard to new town development. The officials strongly recommended the hiring of an experienced management team, including a full-time project director.[104]

The studies and preliminary planning required by HUD prompted further changes in McKissick's vision. In January 1970, McKissick announced the completion of preliminary planning. He also announced an increase in Soul City's projected population, from 18,000 to 50,000 by 1990, because of favorable studies. "It's been proven our idea is more than viable and that we are on the right track," he said. Four studies -- on the industrial and economic potential of the area, on sanitation problems, on Potential land use and an area economic plan -- focused on Soul City's advantageous location but depended on projections on the region's future growth. McKissick, still based in New York but traveling frequently to Warren County, received encouragement from reputable sources. "I have studied your projection for Soul City and am greatly impressed by it," wrote Reston developer Robert Simon. "It is obvious that the concepts involved are solidly based on an understanding of what makes a good community and how to go about making it." Simon, however, raised one caveat: "I have the impression that perhaps the compromises from the ideal that would be necessary to achieve economic viability have not been sufficiently taken into consideration." In general, though,

studies, advice and a faith in the future pushed a willing McKissick to expand his vision, which started with trading posts and farm clusters to a medium-sized city.[105]

By February, McKissick, frustrated by what he perceived as slow movement on his proposal, sent Jackson an ultimatum of sorts through registered mail. In the most empassioned language yet, McKissick pleaded for a loan guarantee, in this "the critical period in our life," "the brink of disaster as far as banking circles are concerned." McKissick ends with a personal appeal: "Finally, Sam, you are a committed man; this I know. Those bankers who do not know want some evidence that you are going to make things -- and move things right away."[106] The appeal spurred Jackson to action later in the year. Jackson wrote both Donald Rumsfeld, director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, and James Farmer, assistant secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and former CORE head in the space of two weeks. From both, he requested information on possible assistance their departments could give Soul City and urged their earliest consideration.[107]

HUD, itself, took a positive step to aid the project by making a $250,000 urban planning assistance grant to the state of North Carolina for planning the Soul City region.[108] The state had applied to HUD for the grant in June 1970. The previous month, Gov. Scott had established 17 multi-county planning regions, including the Kerr-Tar region encompassing Warren County.[109] In November 1970, McKissick submitted a final application for a loan guarantee and planning funds for Soul City. On December 31, President Richard Nixon signed the Housing and

Urban Development Act of 1970, which liberalized provisions for new community development. Title VII of the act provided stronger guarantees for the bonds of private and public new community developers and offered direct loan and grant assistance.[110] He sent HUD a revised application for $33 million the next February.[111] "The major long range objective of Soul City," the application stated, "is to find solution to urban socio-economic problems through creative involvement of citizens and neighbors of the new community in the planning and development process." The application promised that Soul City would raise income and education levels of Warren County residents.[112] In May, McKissick presented his vision to HUD officials, a presentation Jackson termed "excellent."[113] And in August, North Carolina approved the project.[114] Also in August, HUD's Community Development Corporation Board of Directors first considered Soul City. In following months, the board studied an economic feasibility report and further considered the project. In the aftermath of a September 15 meeting, McKissick received some good news and some bad news: The former that Soul City met the objectives of the new community program, the latter that McKissick needed to raise $1.5 million in equity for the board to hear a final presentation and make a decision.[115]

McKissick worked to meet those requirements for almost six months. In February 1971, with preliminary research and planning complete, McKissick and his team returned to Washington to make the critical presentation. McKissick conducted a dry run the night before his formal pitch. It lasted from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m.[116] The practice proved valuable. After the meeting McKissick felt

confident; by late April he expressed some impatience. "(I)t should be clear that we are progressing on every front and that we have a high degree of cooperation from the State of North Carolina, regional government, local government and from the various federal departments and agencies," he wrote to board chairman William Nicoson. "What we need now to move ahead aggressively on industrial locations and additional federal support is announcement of the offer of commitment."[117] McKissick's appeals were answered less than two months later when the board issued an offer of commitment, subject to the completion of financial and planning requirements. Not suprisingly, Jackson broke the good news to McKissick.[118]

V

Three years after McKissick first publicly announced Soul City and more than a quarter-century since he first envisioned the project, Soul City received its first breath of life. On June 30, 1972 N. C. Gov. Robert Scott and HUD Secretary George Romney announced $14 million in loan guarantees for Soul City. Scott pledged North Carolina's full cooperation; Romney said Soul City would mean "new hope for people of all races" in Warren County.[119]

Support and shared hopes from two major voices of the liberal establishment followed almost immediately. The New York Times called Soul City "a not impossible dream;" The Washington Post called it "a vital experiment."[120] Soul City, The Times editorialized, "is a sane and practical as well as imaginative concept." "Long before it is finished and flourishing," The Times continued,

"its future should be clear enough to arouse the hopes and emulation of other Americans for whom the answer to a sharecropper's poverty is neither the urban ghetto nor Tobacco Road, but rather a new start at a new skill in a new town."[121] Not to be outdone, The Post described Soul City as "perhaps the most vital experiment yet in this country's halting struggle against the cancer of hectic urbanization." The $14 million, The Post advised, was "support not for an all-black utopia," nor "merely a handout" but "support for a new possibility of fulfilling the century-old promise of 40 acres and a mule."[122]

The honeymoon did not last long for McKissick or his vision-becoming-reality. With the HUD loan comitment in hand, McKissick, largely absent from the national political scene since his CORE days, publicly reentered politics with a flourish. Controversy soon ensued.

On a sweltering July day, less than a month after HUD issued the loan guarantee, McKissick basked in the glory of testimonials on his behalf during the first annual banquet of the Soul City Foundation.[123] The banquet's principal speaker reflected one of the prinicpal themes of McKissick's interaction with government: his intimacy with contacts whom he had known in his previous civil rights experience. McKissick first encountered Robert Brown, a High Point, N. C. public relations man and the highest-ranking black in the White House, during the early 1960s civil rights movement. Brown and McKissick kept in contact over the years; when President-elect Richard Nixon appointed Brown one of his special assistants in December 1968, their relationship gained life. "A week would never go by,"

McKissick recalls, that the two past civil rights activists would not be in touch. Brown helped keep McKissick highly visible to his superior. "We attempted to work with the President and Bob was his right-hand man," McKissick recounts. "When I went to Washington, I went to Washington to see Bob and Bob would call up and the President would take time off to see me when I didn't go there to see him."[124]

At the banquet, Brown, lauding Nixon during a reelection year, reminded the audience that the Nixon administration was "putting money where mouths and promises had been before."[125] Brown, himself, had much to do with that change. Nixon's first black appointee, Brown had primary responsibility for pushing Nixon's black capitalism program.[126] Or as Brown puts it himself: "I felt that my role then, is now and will be as long as I live to make double sure that blacks and other minorities are included in whatever happens. I pursued it with some great vigor."[127]

Among the projects that landed on Brown's desk, there was none he pursued with more vigor than McKissick's Soul City. Apparently, a so-called McKissick group met in Brown's White House office;[128] certainly the project met criteria for his support. "I've always felt that anything having to do with the city, county or the state I live ought to have some preferences with me," he recalls. Meetings took place in the White House for highly visible and highly sensitive subjects. Soul City met one and probably both requirements. "Certainly I wanted Floyd to be successful with his project," Brown remembers. "I had high hopes for him. . .because it was in the state of North Carolina . . .and because it was a black man and black people who were

leading it and dealing with it. . .and I thought it would be a very good thing for the administration and for the country to have blacks in a solid moving project like that, building a city -- that's a significant thing anywhere in the world." Thus, Brown made his advocacy of Soul City clear. "I let it be known," he remembers. "I didn't mealy mouth about that. I let the people handling the whole thing know that all things being equal and all things being legal, above board, that I thought it would be a very good thing. . ."[129] And, Brown once admitted, he made "a few phone calls when things bogged down on Federal participation."[130]

Both Brown and McKissick remember Nixon's first term fondly, as a time when black enterprises, not just Soul City, received ample support. "It was a very good time because the president was responsive and he gave me the leverage to deal with it," Brown recalls. McKissick adds: "We had a lot of good things going. . .He was accessible. You could talk with him."[131] McKissick, Brown, Jackson, Reginald Hawkins and a few others comprised the black capitalist group. "We were black with civil rights background and an interest in economic development," Hawkins remembers.[132]

Pride in black capitalism and an emphasis on pragmatism pushed McKissick into an alliance with the Nixon administration and made him one of the few spokesmen of black Republicanism. The Republicans, he said, responded more favorably to his brand of bootstrapping of economic uplift than the Democrats, whom he dismissed as content to keep blacks on welfare. "For years black people have been sucking the sugar tit," he said, "and you know

what a sugar tit really is -- it's a pacifier, it's something that makes you think you have got something when you ain't got it."[133] That same hot July day as the banquet, McKissick officially changed his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican.[134] Thereafter, he campaigned enthusiastically for Nixon's reelection, particularly among blacks. At news conferences across the country, McKissick, sporting a "'72 Self-Determination" lapel button featuring a black GOP elephant, said blacks must participate in two-party politics to solve their economic, political and social problems. "If you've got a two-party system, it is stupid for all black people to be in one. . . The Republicans represent too large a power base to be ignored."[135] Most of all, McKissick's politics remained pragmatic. "They are based upon the desire to accomplish solutions to problems, not rhetoric," he once stated.[136] In mid-October, McKissick announced the formation of a new Republican-oriented group. The Democratic Party, he said, had made "some accomplishments" for black people, but had "done as much as it can do at this time." Brown, who encouraged the group's formation, attended a banquet that initially financed the National Committe for a Two Party System.[137]

McKissick's support for Nixon drew fire from other blacks, but he was not alone. Entertainer Sammy Davis Jr., singer James Brown and actor Jim Brown, among others, also felt the wrath of blacks for their endorsements of Nixon. Emotions ran especially high due to the belief that Nixon was buying black support through the administration's black capitalism programs.[138] "The President has bought them, and they have sold out," said Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Oh., chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.[139] Julian Bond,

a Georgia state legislator, called black Nixon supporters "political prostitutes."[140] Others charged "Uncle Tom," causing the Eastern coordinator of black political activities for the Committee to Re-elect the President to admit: "Man, we are catching hell in the black community because black Democrats are creating the impression that the President is anti-black."[141]

McKissick caught his share of flak, primarily because of the timing of his official political conversion, the loan guarantee received by Soul City and Nixon's reelection campaign. Other visible Soul City-Nixon connections occurred. McKissick, for instance, brought a Soul City exhibit to the Republican Convention in Miami Beach. The exhibit, complete with North Carolina travel posters, Soul City license plates, gigantic charts, pamphlets and editorial reprints, flourished in the Fontainebleau Hotel lobby. "There's a huge number of businessmen involved in the Republican Party. We've got sort of a captive audience here," said Sam Tidwell, a McKissick aide. McKissick, meanwhile, kept busy spreading the gospel of Soul City. "I've been making business contacts all the time I've been here. I don't think that I've slept for more than four hours since I've been here," he said.[142]

In 1975, one of North Carolina's major newspapers reiterated the charges of political expediency calling Soul City "a reward for a party switch." "The record shows," The News and Observer alleged, "that the federal government's multimillion dollar investment in Soul City is Floyd B. McKissick's reward for changing his political colors."[143] An examination of the record, however, gives a much more complex, ambiguous picture.

McKissick recalls that although he did not officially change

his party registration until 1972, he did crossover on numerous previous occasions. In supporting Dwight Eisenhower in 1952, John Kennedy in 1960, Robert Kennedy in 1968 and, after the younger Kennedy's assassination, Richard Nixon, McKissick determined his allegiance partly by the candidate's chances for winning and by who offered the most hope for progress in civil rights.[144] Indeed, McKissick's support for Nixon did not begin just with the 1972 re-election campaign. Within a month of Nixon's election in 1968, McKissick wrote a column in praise of Nixon in one of the nation's leading black newspapers. "I predict that Nixon will make many changes for the good of Black People in this country," he wrote, "and will make these changes without seriously cutting back on meaningful programs now in existence."[145]

However, McKissick does admit that he was more active in his support in 1972, partly because, he recalls, he was more prominent then. Brown describes McKissick then as "someone with a constituency who is saying something credible about the administration."[146] McKissick also recalls that he could be more certain of continued support from Nixon than a new president. "Once we got the loan guarantee, I was certain we were going to need the ongoing support of whatever administration was going to be in Washington," he recalls. "That was just the start; you were going to need that administration all the way through."[147]

McKissick's increased activity in 1972 also resulted from a more intenseeffort for black votes on the part of Nixon officials -- chief among them Brown. Brown and his collegues traveled the country in quest of support for Nixon. Brown chaired a black vote committee within the Nixon campaign, which also included

Paul Jones, black vote division executive director; Ed Sexton, Republican National Committee; Stan Scott, White House communications staff member; and HUD's Jackson. The groups met weekly and, as the election, as often as thrice daily. The emphasis on black votes started much earlier, Brown recalls, almost immediately after the 1968 election in which Nixon received but about ten percent of the black vote. Black and other minority leaders were invited to White House briefings were ideas and suggestions were exchanged.[148] Though Brown pursued and caught prominent blacks, McKissick was a particular prize. "We were trying to get as many people as we could," Brown recalls. "McKissick was an important man to that effort. . .I thought he was lending a lot to the campaign. I knew he was a good man and I felt we needed his support and he volunteered it."[149]

The Senate Watergate Committee uncovered a secret plan devised by Nixon re-election officials in 1971 and early 1972 to politicize the federal bureaucracy, to make it more responsive to Nixon. Nixon campaign officials used "grantsmanship" to reward blacks and other minorities who supported the president. A June 26, 1972 memorandum from Fred Malek, a White House and campaign official who reported directly to CREEP Director John Mitchell, described the responsiveness program: "Bob Brown and his staff have identified all Blacks who are receiving, or have received money from this administration," the memo read. "These recipients will be utilized as a source of contributions and volunteers, and as as a group of visible Blacks to be used to reach the voters in their areas of influence."[150]

Brown admits that his office maintained a list of possible

supporters among recipients of federal money, but he recalls: "I never called up anyone and said, 'Okay I gave you $5 million last week and now I want you to kick into the campaign.' If I had have, I would be in jail now. I would have gone to jail with the rest of them."[151]

For the case of McKissick and Soul City in particular, there seem no easy answers. Soul City did receive $14 million in loan guarantees during an election year. McKissick did stump for Nixon, attend at least two campaign strategy sessions and contribute $500 to CREEP on May 22, 1972. Federal law prohibited political contributions by government contractors at any time between the commencement of negotiations and the completion of their contract. At the time, McKissick, who denied he was a contractor, made the gift, he was an officer or director of three Soul City organizations negotiating with the government. All were successful in their appeals for funds.[152]

Both McKissick and Brown recall no direct connection between Soul City and the 1972 election. Interestingly, both use the same phrase in their denials: there was no"quid pro quo." Adds Brown: "We never put an arm on McKissick and told him, 'You've got to do this because you got Soul City down here.' He did it voluntarily. Nobody ever said to him or anybody involved in that thing, 'Now you do this and support me and I'll give you some contracts or something.' As far as I can remember, Floyd McKissick's Soul City got to where it got, it got the money it got on its own merits."[153]

McKissick did not rest on the accomplishment of the loan committment. He sought support from every possible agency that

could assist Soul City's development. Those efforts yielded fruit; McKissick succeeded in gaining more support from federal agencies outside HUD than any other federally funded new town. The support included almost $1.7 million from the Office of Economic Opportunity to provide health care, social planning and economic development; almost $100,000 from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and a $12,500 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Later, McKissick discussed his experience in maneuvering through the bureaucracy: "White people use all facts of government," he said, while blacks confined themselves to OEO and sometimes HEW and HUD. . ."Our project opened up the avenues to really develop liaison and contacts in all the federal agencies. The cooperation we received demanded a hell a lot of work on our part, and it required us to do the kind of work that they normally don't expect black people to even know how to do. I think we have measured up to a standard because we have measured up to a standard not set by blacks, but a standard set by whites."[154]

McKissick's connections within the Nixon administration did not hurt either, as evidenced by a memorandum, dated June 21, 1973, from a White House aide to the HUD undersecretary: ". . .the whole New Communities program is and was expected to be an experimental venture with inherent risks. We should not now argue that because one of these new communities is 'marginal,' it should be scrubbed. Unless we go ahead with this, how are we ever going to find out whether a new town, beginning from scratch in an entirely rural area, can be made to succeed?

"If we now say 'no' to McKissick, we will stand accused not only of reneging on specific commitments to him, but of reneging

on the President's commitment to the whole minority enterprise concept. However unfair or inaccurate those accusations may be in a narrow sense, in the broader context they will be persuasive to the public and damaging to all of us on the domestic side of the Administration.

"We should give Soul City the green light and inform the interested agencies that we have done so. . ."[155]

VI

McKissick's interaction with the Nixon administration continues and broadens a theme which underlies, and, as in McKissick's support of Nixon during 1972, springs forward from the story of Soul City's genesis. Throughout Soul City's birth, McKissick relied on patronage and personal contacts -- William Seabron, Sam Jackson and Robert Brown, the most notable -- to prevent the abortion of an idea, the death of a dream. Otherwise, such an unconventional project -- by the standards of new town planners, by the usual qualifications of financial institutions and by the norms of a society which did not expect such audacious visions from blacks -- faced the vagaries of faceless bureaucracy. McKissick defended his idealism ("I think I've got a right to dream. . .") but recognized the need for pragmatism ("You've got to ride the right horse at the right time. Cash in on the fads. . ."). McKissick's strategy -- largely born of necessity -- succeeded. His machinations brought him the loan guarantee without which his vision was destined to remain but a dream.

His strategy, however, had distinct limitations: his friends left government, he could not hope to cultivate connections at every crucial juncture or in each necessary office.

In sum, McKissick, vulnerable to the viccitudes of political change, depended on his skills and charisma, both of which, while extensive, were not inexhaustible.

The strategy, too, held real costs. In the case of McKissick's support of Nixon, the price was high indeed. McKissick's choice forever cast doubt, questions, the specter of impropriety on him and on his vision. His actions alienated him from many black leaders and civil rights activists, who perhaps could have offered him invaluable assistance in his venture. McKissick, accused of being an "Uncle Tom" which his father told him never to be, may also have dimmed enthusiasm among the black urban poor for his project. To the people Soul City was supposedly designed for, McKissick's actions linked him inextricably with black capitalism and his project with political payoffs from Nixon that many perceived as token handouts to divert attention from the needs of the many. It seemed heretical to sell one's soul, even for Soul City.

VII

On November 9, 1973, almost a year-and-a-half after the announcement of the $14 million guarantee, any controversy weighed lightly for it was a time for celebration. McKissick sent out invitations, in fancy script, that read: "Floyd McKissick and the Soul City Foundation, Inc., cordially invite you to be present at the Creation. . ."[156] The North Carolina A & T University marching band set a festive mood for the groundbreaking. A souvenir table did brisk business in Soul City momentos; one man, rather than buying anything, scooped

soil in a box to take home. And speaker after speaker proclaimed the groundbreaking a historic occasion.[157] Wearing a yellow souvenir hard hat, Gov. James Holshouser headed a list of dignitaries who joined McKissick in breaking ground at Soul City. HUD officials, White House aide Stan Scott, black mayors Howard Lee of Chapel Hill, Clarence Lightener of Raleigh and Johnny Ford of Tuskeegee, Ala., and the mayors of Henderson and Oxford were among the crowd of 500.[158] Holshouser, North Carolina's first Republican governor since Reconstruction, praised Soul City as a "symbol of progress for black and whites, and of the same spirit that gave motivation to Christopher Columbus." Later, he took note of a passing train. "Those trains used to carry people from places like Warren County out to other cities where opportunity seemed greater," he said. "Often they found unhappiness and disillusionment. I think Soul City will start to reverse that trend and that soon trains will be carrying people back to North Carolina."[159]

Under a bright autumn sky, McKissick, flanked by his wife and parents, basked in the sun and the glory of the moment. "On that day, I was happy because my mother and daddy were happy," he remembers. "I had no doubt in my mind that what I was doing was correct. I was grateful to the president, I was grateful to the governor and I was grateful to all my friends and supporters who had come to see Soul City get started."[160] But despite the celebration, McKissick knew that his vision, during its genesis, had taken forms he had not forseen. After the choice to pursue Soul City, McKissick made the crucial decision to enter the government maze. That maze led first to the Department of Agriculture and,

then, the Department of Housing and Urban Development. His route paralleled changes in his vision: from trading posts and farming communes to a town of 18,000 to a city of 50,000 or more. As McKissick's vision made its way through the bureaucracy, planning studies and, seemingly, the sweep of history contributed to its evolution and growth. Once ensconsed within government, McKissick made other significant decisions: to rely on personal contacts and patronage, which further entwined him in the morass. In some ways, events had a momentum of their own now. All McKissick could do was hold on tight to his dream.

NOTES

[1]Holy Bible, King James version (Cleveland: World Publishing Co.)

[2]New York Amsterdam News, 5 October 1968, p. 1; "Plans of McKissick Enterprises, October 1, 1968," Office of Secretary of Agriculture papers (hereafter Freeman papers), Box 98, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[3]The New York Times, 14 January 1969, p. 39.

[4]The Winston-Salem Journal, 1 July 1972, p. 1.

[5]Floyd McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N.C., 9 November 1983; McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N.C., 14 December 1983.

[6]Ibid., The New York Times, 14 January 1969, p. 1.

[7]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983; McKissick interview, 14 December 1983; The Winston-Salem Journal, 1 July 1972, p. 1.

[8]The New York Times, 22 December 1974.

[9]Floyd B. McKissick Enterprises, Corporate Records (hereafter McKissick Enterprises records), President's Report, 21 August 1969.

[10]McKissick Enterprises press release, 3 October 1968, Freeman papers, Box 98, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[11]Floyd McKissick, Three Fifths of a Man (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1969), pp. 124-25; Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Making of America (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 195-97.

The Jamaican-born Garvey came to New York City in 1916, with a dream of a black empire governed by blacks. Through the Universal Negro Improvement Association and the Negro World newspaper, he preached racial pride and black nationalism. At the height of his influence in the mid-1920s, Garvey had upwards of a million followers. He also proselytized economic self-sufficiency; that proved to be his undoing. Garvey's numerous business enterprises failed. He was eventually convicted of mail fraud, jailed, pardoned by President Calvin Coolidge and deported.

[12]McKissick, Three Fifths of a Man, p. 28.

[13]Ibid., p. 33.

[14]Ibid., p. 158.

[15]Ibid., pp. 155-56.

[16]Ibid., p. 126; McKissick Enterprises, "Purpose and Potential," 13 September 1968, Freeman papers, Box 98, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[17]McKissick Enterprises, "Corporate Goals," 23 September 1968, Freeman papers, Box 98, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[18]McKissick Enterprises, "Plans of McKissick Enterprises," 1 October 1968, and "Projected Activities," 18 October 1968, Freeman papers, Box 98, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[19]McKissick interview, 14 December 1983.

[20]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983; T. T. Clayton, personal interview, Warrenton, N.C., 26 March 1984.

[21]N. C. Department of Administration, State Planning Division, "The Beginning of a Regional Planning Process," December 1971, pp. 4, 22.

[22]The Charlotte Observer, 9 March 1969, p. 1; The Washington Post, 3 July 1972, p. 1.

[23]The New York Times, 22 December 1974.

[24]Dwayne E. Walls, The Chickenbone Special (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 23.

[25]The Charlotte Observer, 18 April 1971.

[26]Walls, pp. 23, 82, 126.

[27]Walls, pp. 23-25.

[28]The Charlotte Observer, 23 May 1968; N. C. Manpower Development Corp., Project Homeward Bound and Autry speech delivered to N. C. Association of Editorial Wrtiers, Southern Pines, N. C., 22 May 1968 (both in possession of Daniel Pollitt, Chapel Hill, N. C.); George Autry, telephone interview, Durham to Chapel Hill, N. C., 3 April 1984.

The Charlotte Observer, 29 October 1967, 16 December 1967, 22 May 1968, 5 December 1968, 28 April 1969, 25 February 1972. N. C. Manpower Development Corp., based in Chapel Hill, was created in 1967 by a group of businessmen and academic experts and chaired by Gov. Luther Hodges. As the North Carolina Fund phased out in November 1968, it took over some of the Fund's programs, including a mobility project, started in 1965, that moved eastern North Carolina unemployed to the Piedmont.

Autry interview. Project Homeward Bound was never implemented as it met opposition from northern community action and social service agencies afraid of losing their clients. A proposal to the Department of Labor never received funding. In retrospect, Autry says, the project was not really necessary as people moved back to the Sun Belt anyway in search of employment. N. C. Manpower Development Corp., as of this writing, is concerned with education, economic development, job training -- in moving from the industrial to the post-industrial era.

[29]Autry interview.

[30]Pollitt to Autry, 13 February 1969 (in Pollitt's possession).

[31]McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N. C., 22 February 1984.

[32]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983; The News and Observer, 5 March 1975, p. 1.

[33]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983; Dorothy Waller, personal interview, Durham, N. C., 14 March 1984.

[34]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983; Gordon Carey, personal interview, Raleigh, N. C., 8 March 1984.

[35]President's Report, Car-Vir Investors board minutes, 19 February 1969, McKissick Enterprises records.

Car-Vir Investors bought the land in February 1969 from Perry and, in turn, sold the land to McKissick Enterprises.

[36]Ervin Galantay, "Black new towns: the fourth alternative," Progressive Architecture, August 1968, pp. 126-31.

[37]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983; The News and Observer, 14 January 1969, p. 1.

[38]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983.

[39]Carlos C. Campbell, New Towns: Another Way to Live (Reston: Reston Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 125-26.

[40]McKissick interview, 9 November; Carey interview.

[41]Hugh Mields, Federally Assisted New Communities: New Dimensions in Urban Development (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Land Institute, 1973), pp. 22-23.

[42]McKissick interview 9 November 1983. Rouse to author, 1 November 1983. Rouse declined an interview.

[43]McKissick interview 9 November 1983. The New York Times, 23 August 1970, p. 72. Irving Fain died 22 August 1970.

[44]McKissick interview 9 November 1983.

[45]Afro-American Encyclopedia, Vol. 8 (North Miami, Fla.: Educational Book Publishers, 1974), pp. 232-35. The Washington Post, 31 December 1980. William Seabron died 30 December 1980.

[46]Memorandum from Seabron to Freeman, 28 October 1968, Freeman papers, Box 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[47]Memoranda from Seabron to Freeman, 13 December, 16 December, 19 December, 30 December 1968, Freeman papers, Box 24, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[48]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983; The New York Times, 14 January 1969, p. 39; The News and Observer, 14 January 1969, p. 1; The Charlotte Observer, 14 January 1969, p. 1; The Charlotte News, 14 January 1969, p. 1.

[49]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983; The New York Times, 14 January 1969, p. 39.

[50]The New York Times, 14 January 1969, p. 39.

[51]Walls, pp. 161-62; McKissick interview, 22 February 1984.

[52]The News and Observer, 14 January 1969, p. 1.

[53]The News and Observer, 15 January 1969, p. 1.

[54]McKissick interview, 9 November 1983; Clayton interview.

[55]The News and Observer, 22 February 1969, p. 3.

[56]The Charlotte Observer, 9 March 1969, p. 1.

[57]John T. Sun, "Helping a Hesitant Host to Accept a New Community," speech delivered to American Institute of Planners, Confer-In-West, San Francisco, 24-28 October 1971, p. 4.

[58]Business Week, 17 January 1970, p. 106.

[59]McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N.C., 25 January 1984.

[60]"Communities: Columbia's carefully cultivated institutions are beginning to bear fruit," City, October 1969, p. 39.

[61]McKissick interview, 25 January 1984. Amos Capps died.

[62]The News and Observer, 14 January 1969, p. 1.

[63]The News and Observer, 19 January 1969.

[64]The Charlotte Observer, 30 March 1969, p. C1.

[65] The New York Times, 16 January 1969, p. 28.

[66] See, for example, Rep. L. H. Fountain, D-N.C., to George Romney, Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 19 June 1969, internal file on Soul City (hereafter HUD files), Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[67] Request for Information, Rep. David Pryor, D-Ark., to HUD Congressional Laison Officer, 27 February 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[68] City, October 1969, p. 38.

[69] Daniel Pollitt, personal interview, Chapel Hill, N.C., 2 March 1984; Pollitt to McKissick, 13 February 1969; Pollitt to Clayton, 13 February 1969; Charles Donegan, McKissick Enterprises staff counsel, to Pollitt, 13 March 1969 (all in Pollitt's possession).

[70] Herman Mixon Jr. with Francis H. Parker, The Genesis and First Two Years of the Soul City Project, with Questions for its Future (Chapel Hill: Center for Urban and Regional Studies, University of North Carolina, February 1971), p. 18.

[71] David Godschalk, telephone interview, Durham to Chapel Hill, 21 March 1984; The Charlotte Observer, 18 January 1970; McKissick to Godschalk, 14 January 1970; The Planning Process for New Town Development: Soul City, A Planning Studio Course, (Chapel Hill: Department of City and Regional Planning, University of North Carolina, Fall 1969). Parker declined an interview.

Godschalk says of the Soul City seminars: "I think it was excellent -- a very good problem for the student to deal with. It brought all the aspects of new town development into one problem." He later served as a consultant and also a board member of the Warren Regional Planning Corp. "It was a fascinating experiment," he says of Soul City. "I had a great sense of mission, of social purpose, building a new town in rural North Carolina with helping black people the focus."

[72] The News and Observer, 19 January 1969, p. 1.

[73] The News and Observer, 24 January 1969, p. 1.

[74] Jack Underhill, unpublished manuscript on new communities program, p. 22; Memorandum from Paul Brace, new communities division, to Robert Paul, 12 February 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[75] Underhill manuscript, p. 22; Report on January 1969 meeting, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[76] McKissick to Paul, 20 January 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[77]Preliminary project review, May 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[78]Memorandum from Paul to Brace, 12 February 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[79]Preliminary project review, May 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.; City, October 1969, p. 38.

[80]Underhill manuscript, p. 26.

[81]Underhill manuscript, p. 22; Report on January 1969 meeting, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[82]McKissick to Hammer, Greene, Siler and Associates, 24 April 1970, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[83]Hammer, Greene, Siler and Associates to McKissick, 22 May 1970, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[84]City, October 1969, p. 40.

[85]Underhill manuscript, p. 27.

[86]Ibid., p. 28.

[87]Campbell, pp. 122-23.

[88]Fountain to Romney, 16 June 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[89]Ervin to Romeny, 30 June 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[90]Riegle to William Nicoson, New Communities Administration director, 1 July 1970; Javits to McKissick, 12 June 1969; Ottinger to Romney, 1 July 1970; HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[91]Paul to McKissick, 14 February 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[92]The Negro Almanac: A Reference Work on the Afro American, 4th ed. Harry Ploski and James Williams, eds. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983), p. 424.

Langston Hughes, Fight For Freedom: The Story of the NAACP (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1962); The New York Times, 23 June 1953, p. 21, 24 June, p. 25, 25 June, p. 39, 26 June, p. 17. At the 1953 NAACP convention in St. Louis, Channing Tobias, chairman of the board of directors, called for the creation of a

Fighting Fund for Freedom to raise $1 million a year for 10 years and with the theme "Free by '63" celebrating the centennial of Emancipation. The six-day 44th annual convention, attended by 700-plus delegates, dropped the separate but equal doctrine in favor of complete integration.

The New York Times, 29 September 1982, IV, p. 26. Jackson died 28 September 1982.

[93]McKissick interview, 14 December 1983.

[94]McKissick to Jackson, 2 April 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[95]Campbell, pp. 121-22.

[96]Ruby McZier, telephone interview, Durham to Washington, D.C., 29 March 1984.

[97]Underhill manuscript, p. 24; Jackson to McKissick, 11 August 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[98]Jackson to McKissick, 11 August 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[99]Underhill manuscript, p. 24.

[100]Treasurer's Report to Our Board Members, 21 August 1969, McKissick Enterprises records.

[101]Resolution, 21 August 1969, McKissick Enterprises records.

[102]President's Report, 21 August 1969, McKissick Enterprises records.

[103]McKissick Enterprises records.

[104]Underhill manuscript, p. 24; T. M. Alexander, director new communities division, to Carey, 7 November 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[105]The News and Observer, 15 January 1970; Durham Morning Herald, 15 January 1970; Simon to McKissick, 22 July 1969, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[106]McKissick to Jackson, 11 February 1970, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[107]Jackson to Rumsfeld, 14 October 1970; Jackson to Farmer, 23 October 1970; HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

The New York Times, 6 November 1968, p. 1., 2 February 1969, p. 52, 13 February 1969, p. 33. When appointed 12 February 1969,

Farmer was considered the most prominent black in the Nixon administration. In 1968, Farmer unsuccessfully ran for Congress against Shirley Chisolm, who became the first black woman in Congress.

[108]Underhill manuscript, p. 25.

[109]John T. Sun, "Helping a Hesitant Host to Accept a New Community," speech delivered to American Institute of Planners, Confer-In-West, San Francisco, 24-28 October 1971.

[110]Mields, pp. 22-23.

[111]McKissick to Jackson, 24 February 1971, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[112]McKissick Enterprises, Excerpts from application to HUD for guarantee, February 1971 (in Pollitt's possession), pp. 27, 72.

[113]Jackson to McKissick, 10 May 1971, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[114]Underhill manuscript, p. 25. Randolph Hendricks to Carey, 16 August 1971, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[115]Underhill manuscript, p. 140; Jackson to McKissick, 28 September 1971, HUD files Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[116]Campbell, p. 124.

[117]McKissick to Nicoson, 27 April 1972, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[118]Underhill manuscript, p. 140; Jackson to Soul City Development Corp., 23 June 1972, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[119]The Winston-Salem Journal, 1 July 1972, p. 1; The Washington Post, 3 July 1972, p. 1.

[120]The New York Times, 8 July 1972, p. 24; The Washington Post, 6 July 1972, p. 16.

[121]The New York Times, 8 July 1972, p. 24.

[122]The Washington Post, 6 July 1972, p. 16.

The Charlotte Observer, 8 October 1972, p. 1; The News and Observer, 4 November 1973, IV, p. 1; The News and Observer, 29 July 1972. Closer to home, the announcement seemed to convert the skeptics. Warren Record editor Bignall Jones, who said back in 1969 he doubted Soul City would materialize, said that "about $14

million" had changed his mind. "I think it's going to work," he added. Area businessmen said they looked forward to increased business. Black residents of nearby towns said they envisioned Soul City in their futures. Soul City's annual banquet attracted 400 more people than expected. McKissick said that the initial resistance among local residents occurred partially because "they thought you were pipe dreaming. But when the money started flowing in, that view began to soften up."

[123]Durham Morning Herald, 22 July 1972; The News and Observer, 22 July 1972.

[124]McKissick interview, 14 December 1983; Robert Brown, personal interview, High Point, N.C., 2 January 1984.

[125]The News and Observer, 22 July 1972; Durham Morning Herald, 22 July 1972.

[126]The New York Times, 10 December 1968, p. 28.

[127]Brown interview.

[128]Alexander to Bruce Rabb, Brown aide, HUD files, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, D.C.

[129]Brown interview.

[130]Newsweek, 14 August 1972, p. 24.

[131]McKissick interview, 14 December 1983; Brown interview.

[132]Reginald Hawkins, telephone interview, Durham to Charlotte, N. C., 20 March 1984. Hawkins first met McKissick in the late '40s in college; he attended Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte and McKissick North Carolina College in Durham. They kept in contact through their families and through civil rights activities. In the late '60s, both Hawkins and McKissick sat on a Small Business Administration advisory board. Hawkins helped McKissick with the Soul City idea and remained involved with the project, though on an unofficial basis.

[133]Newsweek, 14 August 1972, p. 24.

[134]The New York Times, 10 August 1972, p. 25.

[135]Newsweek, 14 August 1972, p. 24.

[136]Campbell, p. 128.

[137]The New York Times, 15 October 1972, p. 5; Brown interview.

[138]The New York Times, 17 October 1972, p. 29.

[139]Ibid.

[140] The New York Times, 10 August 1972, p. 25.

[141] The New York Times, 17 October 1972, p. 29.

[142] The News and Observer, 24 August 1972, p. 60.

[143] The News and Observer, 3 March 1975, p. 1.

[144] McKissick interview, 14 December 1983.

[145] The New York Times, 1 December 1968, IV, p. 11 (reprinted from The New York Amsterdam News).

[146] McKissick interview, 14 December 1983; Brown interview.

[147] Ibid.

[148] The New York Times, 17 October 1972, p. 29, 12 March 1972, p. 1; The News and Observer, 3 March 1975, p. 1; Brown interview.

[149] Brown interview.

[150] The News and Observer, 3 March 1975, p. 1.

[151] Brown interview.

[152] The News and Observer, 3 March 1975, p. 1.

[153] Brown interview; McKissick interview, 14 December 1983.

[154] Campbell, pp. 124-25.

[155] Memorandum from White House to HUD undersecretary, 21 June 1973, in General Accounting Office, Report of the Comptroller General of the United States; Information on the New Community of Soul City, N.C., 18 December 1975, p. 51.

[156] The News and Observer, 4 November 1973.

[157] The News and Observer, 10 November 1973, p. 1.

[158] Ibid.

[159] The Charlotte Observer, 10 November 1973, p. 1B.

[160] McKissick interview, 25 January 1984.

CHAPTER THREE

JUDGMENT

I

The groundbreaking, though outwardly festive and apparently positive, reflected problems which would ultimately lead to Soul City's doom. And, in the public view, the ceremony marked Soul City's very highest point; subsequent events never reached such levels of fanfare, most did not merit any celebration.

McKissick scheduled the groundbreaking primarily to pressure the federal government to increase support. Though HUD had offered the $14 loan guarantee in June 1972, it did so with several conditions that took almost two years to meet. HUD declined to allow Soul City to accept the offer until it received additional information on debt restructuring, development and marketing strategy, revised cash flow, management and financing agreements.[1] "That was a big event, but that was show, that was public relations," recalls Carey.[2] The final selection of a site for the industrial building did not occur until after the groundbreaking.[3] The pressure worked. The publicity and attendance of dignitaries gave Soul City "a degree of credibility" which served to ease the HUD closing. On the same day as the groundbreaking, HUD sent a draft letter of acceptance to the Soul City Co.[4]

Most importantly, the groundbreaking, like many events, reflected the differing perceptions of HUD officials in Washington and McKissick and his associates in Soul City. For HUD, the

groundbreaking marked the beginnings of an industrial building; for those at Soul City, the event heralded the first realization of a dream. In broader terms, if HUD officials took a pessimistic view of Soul City, the glasses McKissick wore had a decided rose-colored tint. The disparity in perceptions led to conflict and acrimony on both sides. For all their sympathy and commitment, HUD officials did not share McKissick's vision; indeed, they barely saw its shadows through a fog of bureaucracy. The theme reemerges incessantly through Soul City's story.

The disparate perceptions seem logical, stemming largely from the staff's shared background, in marked contrast with the experience of all but a few bureaucrats. The recruitment of staff loomed large throughout Soul City's creation. McKissick emphasized the utilization and cultivation of black talent, though whites also received attention. "We tried to recruit them all, but most whites did not want to be bothered," he recalls.[5] Early on, though, he found a lack of black workers and professionals in certain fields, hampering early plans for Soul City. "We've discovered 72 job categories that no black man can be found in the United States," including any black city attorneys who know how to prepare bond issues or any black sanitary engineers, McKissick said.[6] Through personal recruitment, he managed to add some professionals to Soul City's ranks, like MIT planning school graduate Harvey Gantt. Although McKissick sometimes boasted of bulging folders of resumes from black professionals desiring a Soul City position,[7] the problem of the dearth of qualified blacks in selective and specialized occupations persisted. "The major facet we're facing now is the recruitment

of key people with key skills, who can produce and who can produce on schedule," said McKissick.[8] McKissick stressed that only qualified staff would be hired; he could not "afford the luxury" of hiring blacks summarily.[9] "If I started hiring people on the basis of whether they're black or not, or whether they're the most militant or how big their Afro is or how many times they stick their fists up in the air, I'd be surrounded by incompetents. I want people who can do the job."[10]

Despite the recruitment difficulties, by groundbreaking and through five years of planning, McKissick had assembled an integrated staff of 56 permanent employees and 12 consultants and part-time workers, that included about 20 whites and three Indians. "We have brought together black, white and Indian here," said McKissick. "We find that they agree 90 percent of the time and just by working together, you can destroy five percent of their differences."[11]

Conditions at Soul City also contributed to the different perceptions of reality. For the Soul City staff during those early years, the HUD deliberations and evaluations contained in the bureaucratic language of progress reports and summaries seemed further away than the 200 or so miles to Washington. In fact, to many it seemed a world away from the plush offices and shiny buildings to the trailers and red mud of Soul City. Among early on-site staff, the pioneer ethic held sway. Gordon Carey, one of McKissick's early recruits, served as CORE program director from 1958 to 1964. The former city dweller enjoyed the new rural life. "The first year I was here we spent half of our time unfreezing pipes, pulling cars out of the mud, just getting the physical

systems going," he said. "Everybody's got their own taste, of course, but I like it here. I like living in the country. There's excellent TV. Bowling alleys and movie theaters aren't far, and if you like outdoor life, it's only five miles to Kerr Lake where there's boating and swimming. Actually the sort of life we have had here helps build a good esprit de corps. The vast majority of us feel somewhat like pioneers, carving out a new life and doing something that never has been done before."[12]

Administrative assistant Dorothy Waller shared Carey's sentiments. When she moved to Soul City in August 1971 "it was just nothing there. And we said: 'Well, we're really the first ones to start a new town from scratch.' We really felt like pioneers." The crude conditions, though, almost dissuaded some from their jobs. "It was real muddy, straw everywhere, and when it would rain your car would just get stuck," Waller recalls. "It was terrible. When we first got there I told my sister: 'Oh we should never have left New York. . .Let's just move on to Durham and forget about this because nothing will ever come of this." But then Waller read the HUD proposal and "began to picture what it would be like, the streets and buildings and all that. So we stayed."[13]

The staff who chose the lives of pioneers at Soul City generally thought of their jobs in larger, more exalted terms -- in a sense a continuation of the 1960s civil rights movement. Similar strivings and motives impelled the Soul City staff. "The very boldness of this project will generate far greater support from society than if it was less ambitious," said Soul City planner Gantt, who perhaps best exemplified the Soul City staff

member. He, like McKissick, broke the racial barrier at a major southern university -- at Clemson -- in addition to civil rights activities.[14]

McKissick recruited much of his staff, and almost all his closest associates, from the civil rights movement. Soul City required commitment, belief and faith on nearly the same level as civil rights activists working in deepest Mississippi. In the final analysis, the staff shared, to some extent at least, McKissick's vision. "Most people did not like the area because it was a little isolated, sparsely populated. . .So you were limited to who you could recruit. . .The people who worked generally philosophically wanted to work at Soul City and saw a reason for being there," McKissick remembers.[15] "We had done an excellent job of assembling some very talented people, many of them sharp like myself maybe, interested in creative ways of thinking about land resources and we all believed in Soul City," recalls Gantt. "We believed that it could really happen, given the right things falling into place."[16]

McKissick, himself, required almost total devotion to the project. Among the tests: living on site, a requirement made difficult because of housing shortages, primitive conditions and individual circumstances. "Most professionals liked to commute but our whole concept was to build so that people would live, not commute," McKissick remembers.[17] "I don't think he was delighted, happy with me because ultimately I never did," recalls Gantt, who lived in Durham because his retarded son required continual and potentially emergency medical care. "Only in showing your commitment to being on site were you really going to help to

demonstrate your commitment to the town itself."[18]

Later, when HUD issued the loan guarantee and gained control of hiring, however, the emphasis on civil rights commitment and the pioneer ethic lessened to a degree. In HUD's view, credentials and expertise superseded more ambiguous qualifications of commitment and philosophy. Thus, HUD, in its oversight capacity, changed the criteria, imposing the same restrictions as those on other new towns under its privy. "We had to choose people on their ability period," McKissick remembers. HUD officials continually expressed concern over the "professional qualities" of the staff. For this project, though, less conventional qualities may have been equally, if not more, important.[19]

Although the staff emphasis fell on civil rights background and philosophy, their leanings sometimes clashed with Soul City's reality. The staff shared some of the same dualism and dilemmas which marked McKissick and the development itself. During the early years, Soul City developed on two fronts: industrial planning and infrastructure building coordinated by the for-profit Soul City Co., and social planning organized by the non-profit Soul City Foundation, which devised "innovative educational, recreational, health and cultural schemes. . .well in advance of the expected needs."[20] Or as one staff member put it, the Company was the "money-making" part and the Foundation the "do-good" part of Soul City.[21] During the early years, "The energy went on the Soul City Co. and getting the. . .underpining of the city built."[22] HUD and Soul City staff agreed from the beginning that industries would not locate in Soul City until the necessary utilities were in place. Thus the energy, time

and money went to building the infrastructure and planning.[23]

Any conflict in goals or disagreements, however, remained private and never really threatened to tear Soul City or its staff asunder. Even when Foundation affiliates disagreed vehemently, resignations were not submitted, public statements were not issued; the greater good held greater importance. Foundation board member and longtime McKissick colleague Daniel Pollitt, for instance, disapproved of the emphasis on availability of low-wage, non-unionized labor in attracting industry. "I opposed all that because they were going to bring in sweatshop things, and I wanted everyone to have a union contract and be paid prevailing union wages or the hell with them," Pollitt remembers. Yet, he does not remember any real conflict between the Company and the Foundation: "Well there wasn't because they were the alter egos of Floyd McKissick. We were all-hand picked because of longtime friendship and sympahty toward the common goal and we weren't going to have any serious conflict." The Foundation's work "would enhance the vitality and the livability of the whole place and would publicize it and would be a good social thing to do."[24]

II

For Soul City, 1975 proved a critical year. The dramatic events that marked that year largely determined Soul City's fate. The year started on a positive note. In fact, 1975 could easily have turned out differently, perhaps catapaulting the development to new heights of success. But, soon events went from bad to worse, and from worse to intolerable. During 1975, the first

major, sustained press attack and a subsequent government audit thwarted Soul City's momentum and dimmed the possibility of eventual success. Though not Soul City's death knell, the chances for its redemption lessened dramatically.

The actual development of Soul City began in earnest in March 1974, after HUD finally signed the project agreement and after the sale of $5 million in bonds on March 6, more than a year-and-a-half after the June 1972 announcement of the loan guarantee. In the remainder of 1974, the Soul City Company and its affiliates initiated construction of the primary roads, arranged financing of the regional water system, began construction of the first industrial building, completed a marketing study and negotiated for adjoining land tracts.[25] As one witness said in 1974:

> A year ago, there was little more to Soul City than a road sign on Highway 85 that seemed to point to an expanse of broom sedge and red clay fields surrounding a forlorn little cluster of house trailers, that make up the project's offices. The trailers are still there, but now there are more than 40 of them, housing construction workers and staff. Bulldozers are everywhere; new roads cut through the raw red clay, a day nursery and HeadStart program are underway, a clinic is operating with two doctors to serve the area; a water main is snaking its way to the Kerr Lake Reservoir; the project's first building, a huge industrial facility called SoulTech I, is nearing completion, and construction on the first residential units is set to start within a short time.[26]

In the fall of 1974, McKissick expressed some disappointment with the progress made on physical development, but lauded social accomplishments. "A new town is not just bricks and

mortar, nor sticks and stones, but a new town must be built by people and a new town must have soul," he said.[27]

The climate surrounding Soul City had improved, too. Early resentment from some quarters had changed to a spirit of mutually beneficial cooperation. Warren County, after years of population decline, in 1974 experienced a modest gain and a minor flurry of new construction unconnected to Soul City.[28] Perhaps most important, while most of the other 12 new towns receiving HUD-approved loan guarantees faced financial troubles, Soul City had not yet met any serious snags. Construction occurred on schedule and within budget and a substantial cash reserve remained.[29] McKissick also prepared to ask HUD for a second $5 million installment of the guaranteed debentures. Though HUD cautioned that "concrete evidence of success in industrial marketing" must exist before HUD issued more bonds, the possibility definitely existed.[30]

Ironically, Soul City's very success contributed to its demise. Pat Stith, a veteran investigative reporter at The (Raleigh, N. C.) News and Observer saw one of many press releases announcing road construction. "I saw a news release on the news desk -- I didn't know anything about Soul City at the time -- about the Department of Transportation building roads down there," Stith recalls. "I knew that it was a private for-profit venture, so I wondered why the DOT was building roads there." Stith's curiosity led to a series of stories about the DOT grants; he also "got interested in other grants." Stith went to editor Claude Sitton, who shared Stith's curiosity and decided that the idea warranted further investigation and the

expenditure of the newspaper's resources. That continued interest resulted in a highly publicized and highly critical series -- the first major press attack on Soul City. "It wasn't a decision to go out and do the stories," Stith remembers. "I just happened to see the news release." Thus, apparently through a combination of progress and chance Soul City entered a crucial period of public scrutiny.[31]

When Stith first requested interviews of McKissick and his staff, they expected neither the number of stories nor the negative tone. Most press accounts, primarily favorable, reflected the attitude of Soul City's staff - hope. As late as December 1974, for example, an article in The New York Times contended that "McKissick is succeeding although not 'supposed to!'"[32] Soul City had received some negative publicity previously, but not of the magnitude of the impending stories. Many press accounts repeated the oft-mentioned concerns of slow progress and separatism.[33] For instance, a July 31, 1974 front-page story in The Wall Street Journal linked Soul City with the black separatist village of Oyo Tungi in South Carolina. The "search for 'soul,'" as the article's headline proclaimed, led to the formation of 350 black settlements, most small, rural communities without officials or paved roads. "Soul City," the article said, ". . .promises to be the largest black city-building project ever." Though large differences separated Soul City and Oyo Tungi - probably the most extreme example of separatism - the story acknowledged, it also stressed the similarity: dissatisfaction with white-dominated society encouraged the moves of residents.[34] The Journal's caveat, though, neither satisfied nor

placated McKissick. In a letter to The Wall Street Journal's editor, he asked: "What will happen to the carefully nurtured relationships we have built with area residents when they learn that The Wall Street Journal compares Soul City to a far-out tribal community where polygamy is practiced and babies are ritually murdered?" McKissick answered his own question. "It was a few paragraphs in a short piece, but I assure you that this article, appearing in the pages of the nation's most influential financial paper, could do the Soul City Project incalculable harm."[35] This article caused no incalculable harm; that would be done later by The News and Observer in 1975 and at a more crucial juncture.

More typical of press treatment given Soul City was an Associated Press account in July 1974. The story emphasized the percentage of white staff members (21 of 60), the delay in developing Soul City, the primitive lifestyle of staff in an isolated area and the hope Soul City held for Warren County.[36] Not until The News and Observer articles, though would those questions and issues be discussed in detail and overtly criticized.

So when Stith first appeared at Soul City, the staff greeted him unwarily. "We opened our doors, records, books, everything to Pat Stith," McKissick recalls.[37]

McKissick and his associates, however, might have had some indication of the impending stories' tone from the history of The News and Observer and its editor Claude Sitton.

The story of The News and Observer parallels that of the Daniels family. In August 1894 Josephus Daniels bought The News and Observer, the successor to several failed Raleigh newspapers.

Several themes emerge from the newspaper's inception: an antipathy for the Reconstruction regime, an advocacy of independence and criticism of outside intervention in North Carolina's affairs.[38] Daniels' son, Jonathan carried on his father's and The News and Observer's traditions. The News and Observer's opinions, in the daily editorials, coincided with the views of Daniels, who "typified that rather disparate group referred to as southern liberals or moderates." Daniels advocated a cautious approach to social change but by the mid-1960s came to "see discrimination and segregation in moral terms." He denounced inequality and indirectly declared his belief in integration. "I hope to be on the side of the angels," he wrote in June 1963, "and I am sure there are going to be no color lines, one way or the other, in that congregation." Yet, Daniels still resorted to calls for working out the problem in "a spirit of good will and a climate of calm reason," with "peaceful and constructive solutions" achieved by "good will" and "good order." By the mid-1960s, though, the civil rights movement had changed, and so did Daniels' role as liberal. The movement passed Daniels by. His retirement conveniently coincided with his diminishing role as a rebel in southern race relations.[39]

Daniels, then, epitomized the southern liberal strongly criticized by Martin Luther King Jr., among others. In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," King assailed those who wanted to preserve the social order more than to achieve social justice, who preferred negotiations with powerful white to direct action and expected patience from blacks.[40] Daniels also epitomized the North Carolina progressive: he thought of conflict as inherently bad

and of consensus as the only way to preserve a genteel and civilized way of life. Civility formed the cornerstone of the progressive's beliefs, along with a sense of responsibility and paternalism. Daniels, and The News and Observer, remained firmly entrenched within North Carolina's progressive mystique.[41]

When Daniels phased himself out of daily directorship of The News and Observer, Claude Sitton succeeded as editor. Sitton both inherited and carried on the traditions of the paper and the Daniels family. An Atlanta native, Sitton worked for wire services then joined The New York Times as a reporter in 1956 at age 30. Sitton remembered the days, when he alone covered eleven southern states from Atlanta, wistfully. "I thought and still think that the job I had, which no longer exists, was the best newspaper job in the world, covering the South." Among reporters covering the civil rights movement, he was the reporter's reporter, something of an authority on survival tactics for newsmen. "But after six and a half years of it, I just reached the point where it was too much. . .my family was growing up without me and so forth. So I decided to go to New York. I had sworn that I'd never go back to New York again. But I did."[42] In New York, he served as national editor of The New York Times -- a tenure which proved controversial and taxing. Many Washington reporters, disenchanted with Sitton, "sometimes wondered aloud over what had become of the raw nerve and toughness that had once characterized Sitton's stand against Bull Connor and the Klan." In May 1968, he resigned and joined The News and Observer.[43] "I love the South. I wouldn't work anywhere else," he once said.[44]

Sitton, a repatriated southerner, expressed his qualms about

Soul City from the very beginning. In a 1969 column six days after the Washington announcement, Sitton appealed to many of The News and Observer and Daniels family traditions. "Such undertakings share an unfortunate characteristic," he wrote. "They are sociological sports. They are spawned by an interruption of the normal processes of human relationships, a sickness that infects both parent and offspring." "There is nothing normal in today's world about apartheid, the total separation or segregation of the races," Sitton continued. "And the effort by McKissick and his followers to achieve it is a measure of the desperation many of them must feel at their failure to obtain acceptance by the world outside. Seeing themselves rejected by that world, they now intend to turn their backs upon it. Those who condemn them might consider the influence of a white-dominated society in the development of the defeatism and withdrawal that Soul City symbolizes."[45]

Sitton urged whites to speed integration, to help renew the faiths of blacks in the system. "White society. . .can drift along in the indifference that has bred Soul City and less benign social ills or it can show Negroes through constructive action that. . .faith in the system is justified."[40] In a paragon of southern liberalism and North Carolina progressivism, Sitton dismissed Soul City as antithetical to integration and progress. Sitton's views continued the ideals that bred and sustained The News and Observer and the Daniels family -- ideals that put trust in the ability of logical, civil men to assauge difficulties without outside intervention or a challenge to the existing order. It seemed unconscionable that a Black Power advocate could develop

a project, primarily supported from outside North Carolina, that so clearly clashed with and in many ways showed the inadequacy of those progressive ideals.

The misgivings and pessimism emerged again on March 2, 1975 as the first of dozens of stories appeared after a three-month investigation. The series, Sitton recalls, "arose out of the fact that federal money was being spent or misspent by this group. We have a responsibility to do articles when in our circulation area there are questions of how the money is being put to use."[47] Sitton's justification for the series, then, followed The News and Observer's traditions of independence and provincialism. The introductory article, calling Soul City "a tangled web," stated that after the expense of $5 million in federal funds, there was "no industry, no shops, no houses -- no Soul City." Had McKissick, whose "timetable as a developer has not kept pace with his dreams," the article asked, been "constructing a house of cards," or "carefully preparing a solid foundation for a truly monumental venture in black capitalism?" The copyrighted article also asserted that despite the lack of development, Soul City had provoked little criticism, except for initial resentment among Warren County whites. "The national press and television have simply taken McKissick at his word, with few hard questions asked." The News and Observer asked many difficult questions, and even answered some of them. The introductory piece, and accompanying stories in greater detail, questioned McKissick's political participation, especially in relation to the Nixon reelection campaign and also raised the issues of nepotism, conflict of interest and mismanagement of federal funds within the

Soul City Company and its affiliates.[48]

The stories stunned McKissick and his Soul City associates. "When the first story came out, we were shocked," McKissick recalls. "(H)ere's a person we opened our hearts and minds to, opened the records and let him see." "That whole thing took us very much by surprise," Carey, McKissick's right-hand man, remembers. "We were not expecting it." Their response, though, remained private. On the advice of HUD officials, Soul City officials declined any public comment.[49]

While McKissick and his associates kept a forced silence, not disputing the charges, the wire services transmitted The News and Observer stories and other newspapers repeated the allegations. "Pack journalism," the tendency of reporters and editors to converse on the same story, displayed itself in full force. The phenomenon, caused by competition and shared values, assured that the Soul City project received negative attention and scrutiny nationwide.[50]

Political action followed almost immediately. On March 4, a state legislative committee directed the Secretary of Administration to produce records of state funding for Soul City. Rep. John Ed Davenport, who initiated the request, said he had been curious about the new town project for some time and that his curiosity had increased after reading The News and Observer stories. Gov. James Holshouser also ordered a review of progress at Soul City.[51]

Three days after the initial stories, The News and Observer followed up with an editorial, stating that Soul City needed a thorough audit, preferably by a government agency independent of

the departments and bureaus funding the development. The "questionable apsects" raised in the stories, "are but a few of its disturbing features," the editorial advised. "They suggest strongly that public funds aren't being spent wisely or in an accountable manner." The public would lack any confidence in the project without an independent audit, the editorial continued, and without this confidence McKissick would never attract private industry and consequently no community would develop.[52] The next day, Sen. Jesse Helms and Rep. L. H. Fountain joined The News and Observer's call and asked the General Accounting Office to audit Soul City, cited The News and Observer series as the foundation for their request, though Helms said he had long considered Soul City a "rip-off."[53]

In the next two-and-a-half weeks, The News and Observer leveled a series of other allegations which, in sum, questioned Soul City's very legitimacy. One story raised that Soul City's developer received funds from two different federal agencies HUD and the Office of Minority Business Enterprise for the same task.[54] An accompanying story listed a "shopping list" for which McKissick wanted federal funds.[55] Subsequent articles in the next two-and-a-half weeks aserted that the N. C. Department of Transportation had requested federal assistance for a mass transportation study, despite Soul City being little more than "empty fields." Many of the "prominent people" serving on boards or directors of federally funded agencies involved in Soul City, another story charged, knew "little about the affairs of the McKissick organizations," and failed to attend meetings. The article also implied that McKissick had established a gag order: "After The News and Observer began

interviewing board members of the Warren Regional Planning Corp. by telephone last week, an officer of McKissick Enterprises called some of the board members and asked them not to comment."[56]

McKissick, tired of not responding to the press attacks, scheduled a press conference in Henderson. "(W)e felt that the damage was really hurting us and it was time for us to get out," McKissick recalls.[57] After almost a week of preparations, McKissick faced a packed room of reporters at the Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge and denied the allegations raised by The News and Observer. Soul City, he said, had been slowed by a maze of federal red tape and the "crippling effects" of the national economic slump. All things considered, McKissick called it "remarkable" that the project had progressed so far. After the press conference, Carey said that he felt The News and Observer articles were "fanning racism." "It's not that there were many errors in fact," he said. "But only negative facts were presented in a distorted way and constructive facts were ignored."[58]

The response apparently did not work. For the remainder of the year, McKissick fought additional scrutiny and the threat of aid cutoffs. On April 8, McKissick appeared before a legislative committee and argued against a resolution that would have cut off further state aid to Soul City. The resolution, he said, was "both uncalled for and of questionable constitutional merit." "It would be tragic if a great deliberative body as the legislature. . .would act in haste and without considered basis in fact to censure a project such as ours," he said. McKissick added that he would welcome an audit.[59] An article the next day revealed that OMBE had broken off negotiations on a $320,000

contract to Soul City's planning agency pending an internal investigation.[60]

HUD and other government officials did not join in McKissick's defense until May, almost a full two months after The News and Observer series began. In a telegram dated May 1, Alex Armendaris, director of the Office of Minority Business Enterprises, cleared McKissick of conflict of interest charges and stated that The News and Observer "produced no new facts" on the possible conflict of interest.[61] A second government response, a letter to The News and Observer editor, contained much more direct criticism of the series and emphasized the accomplishments of Soul City, primarily the regional water system. "It is indeed distressing to me to encounter a reporter and a series of articles that so clearly displays preconceived personal bias," wrote Melvin Margolies, assistant administrator in HUD's office of finance. "Undoubtedly, Soul City has many problems and difficulties, some of which are included in Mr. Stith's articles. That the Soul City project should experience obstacles and difficulties is not surprising. That The News and Observer should devote 17 articles over 8 days discussing the project and not find a single positive point or offer a single rationale for its problems is a matter for its readers to ponder. One need only read the major financial publications to conclude that most large-scale real estate developments are presently in serious financial difficulty. It would appear to me that fairness would have required a more balanced attitude, investigation and report."[62]

McKissick waited until June 17 to receive the first good news since the inquiries by The News and Observer began. The state

legislature's Fiscal Research Section found "no specific evidence of improper actions" in use of state funds. The research group said the study, conducted under a 30-day limit imposed by the legislature, was "very limited and should not be considered to be either an adequate fiscal audit or program review."[63]

Meanwhile, as GAO continued its inquiry, HUD administrators seemed to waver and change their minds about Soul City, at least in part because of the negative publicity and GAO scrutiny. Soul City underwent a full staff review in March. Then, HUD commissioned a new market study, completed by Economic Research Associates, which concluded that Soul City could not meet original market projections.[64] For the first time, HUD officials seriously considered the possible failure of Soul City; previously, they just cautioned about the barriers to be hurdled. The status report presented to the July 10 New Communities Development Corp. board meeting concluded: "It is unlikely that a black project will succeed in rural North Carolina absent a major commitment to the project by several significant national industrial clients. Floyd McKissick has leveraged his personal charisma into significant State and Federal grants. Ultimately he may be able to deliver the needed industrial/commercial base. However significant additional HUD commitments must await 'hard' evidence that McKissick can deliver. Obviously McKissick argues that this is a chicken and egg proposition. NCA's response is that we already have a $16,000,000 chicken ($5,000,000 of guaranteed debentures plus $11,000,000 in Federal grants) and that it is time for him to come up with the egg."[65] Apparently, HUD felt the pressure of criticism and consequent qualms about its

continued role in the project.

While the GAO audit progressed, Soul City remained at a virtual standstill. HUD Secretary Carla Hills promised Sen. Helms not to provide any new grants until GAO completed its inquiry. The pledge came after Helms threatened to push for an amendment to an appropriations bill that would prohibit new HUD allocations. "Whatever the result of the inquiry of the GAO, an obvious fact will remain -- Soul City is suspected by many citizens of my state as the greatest single waste of public money that anyone in North Carolina can remember," Helms said in a Senate speech in which he announced the promise.[66]

Other federal agencies followed HUD's lead. Until the audit's completion, they also withheld crucial funds. "It basically came to a screeching halt," McKissick recalls. Soul City firms, though constrained, continued operations. "It cost us money to survive and not do anything because no other agency of the government would make any commitments or honor any commitments that had been previously made."[67]

HUD received the GAO audit in early November, though Helms and Fountain waited until mid-December to release the audit publicly. In general, the audit indicated no basis for the greatest part of allegations contained in news stories. Although the GAO confirmed much of what The News and Observer reported in March, it did not find any violation of federal law.[68] As of March 1975, Soul City and its affiliates had received 27 federal grants, contracts, loans and guarantees totaling $19.2 million. Of that amount, $10.2 million had been awarded and $4.6 million spent. In addition, Soul City benefited from $6.9 million awarded

to other non-affiliated organizations. The 99-page audit addressed four accusations in detail.[69]

On the issue of preferential treatment from federal agencies, the GAO discovered that, on occasion, such agencies did stray from established procedure. OMBE, for instance, awarded a $190,000 contract before establishing procedures for reviewing and approving such a contract. HUD approved basic water and sewer grants totaling $3.5 million after the programs had already terminated. The audit found the allegations of interlocking directorships and nepotism correct, but emphasized that such practices did not violate any contract provisions or other rules. In addition, all family members possessed the education and experience to qualify for the jobs. Third, the GAO confirmed some lack of progress and poor management in some Soul City organizations. It gave, however, the Soul City Co., the prime developer, what amounted to a clean bill of health. As of August 1975, the report concluded, physical development of Soul City remained essentially on target considering the loan guarantee had been signed 18 months earlier. Fourth, the GAO tested a statistical sample of 349 transactions and found that 86, or 25 percent, did not meet one or more tests for allowability. Thus, the GAO raised "serious questions" about some federal expenditures and recommended that the "unallowable" expenditures be identified and recovered by the government.[70]

At the same time as he released the audit in December, Helms, calling Soul City a "massive wasteful boondoggle," asked the Justice Department to review the audit and determine whether legal action should be taken.[71] The next day, McKissick expressed

general pleasure with the audit at a news conference. He blamed the unallowable expenditures cited by the GAO on "inadequate bookkeeping practices on the part of three of our associated entities" and said that "adequate steps" had been taken to remedy the situation. McKissick also charged that politics motivated the criticism of Helms and Fountain. He emphasized, however, the clean bill of health given the Soul City Co. "I am, of course, gratified that the audit clears me and the Soul City Company of the allegations and insinuations raised by The Raleigh News and Observer," he said.[72]

McKissick's gratification, though, turned to more consternation as he found the allegations and insinuations more insidious than he supposed. McKissick and his staff sought to counteract the charges people, made one-on-one contacts, the Soul City Foundation published a history. "We made every effort," McKissick recalls. "We went to despel the notion, dispel the idea. I think we might have corrected some impressions." But for many more, the impressions from the negative publicity remained. Some organizations refused meetings, when "prior to the investigation, we were seen at most of the national organizations." The meetings that did occur felt different, he recalls, somehow colder and more distant.[73] "Once an allegation is made, you can never retract the allegation," he recalls. "It's the allegation that does the damage. It's the first thing, the first concept in the public's mind. It was never cleared up after that."[74]

McKissick and his associates found it difficult to regain momentum after a lost year. "No one would commit themselves

during the period of the audit. We just lost a year."[75] The entire episode affected McKissick's staff as well. "Some might have been affected, but the real core group of my staff was hanging in there," McKissick recalls.[76] "We felt a bit disturbed and felt that what we were doing was really in vain, that nobody understood," remembers administative assistant Dorothy Waller of the 1975 tribulations. "We couldn't understand why they thought we were wasting money. . .taking money from the government and not putting it to good use. It was sort of depressing." When the GAO released the audit, Waller "felt better."[77]

III

The 1975 episodes had lingering effects on Soul City's relationship with HUD, its primary benefactor and one which during the entire period reevaluated the new communities program in general. Disagreements and conflict between Soul City and HUD widened dramatically as bureacrats and experts ascended and political decision makers, who largely sustained Soul City, gave way. Most importantly, the disparate perceptions grew more dissimilar. HUD viewed Soul City as a liability and sought the least costly and embarrassing avenue out. Soul City staff grew increasingly critical of HUD and desperately searched for ways to keep the project alive. Even before the audit period, Soul City administrators, mired in paperwork and studies, became frustrated with HUD and federal agencies generally. "I thought they were assholes both at the regional and national level," recalls Charles Allen, Soul City Co. general manager from February 1974 to September 1975. HUD put "unreal rules" and "asinine restrictions" on the company

--"unbelieveable kind of garbage" -- Allen remembers. "If that was the lead department, you can imagine the kind of garbage that came out of other agencies." The relationship only worsened.[78]

HUD had announced in January 1975 that it would sponsor no more new town developments, but would instead "devote all resources" to assisting existing projects, including Soul City. 1970, a "year of promise for federally-assisted new communities," saw the completion of the statute and administrative design, the approval of the first project and the first guaranteed bond. Preapplications jumped from eight in 1970 under Title IV to 41 in 1971 under Title VII. The promise, however, was not realized in the years that followed. By 1972, it was "clear that the statutory benefits of Title VII were illusory" because new grant programs did not receive funding. Preapplications dropped to a trickle in 1973-74. The economic recession of 1973-75, which "virtually eliminated demand in real estate markets," coincided with high inflation that "caused development costs to skyrocket." Consequently most federally-funded new towns experienced a financial crisis.[79] According to some critics, a lack of commitment also contributed to the demise of federal new communities. "This commitment," said McKissick, himself, "is to stop cost-benefitting people's lives and to be willing to make realistic expenditures to make the new community program a reliable alternative to the deprivation of our cities and soul shattering poverty in our rural areas."[80] In sum, the program met deep financial trouble because of economic realities and some mismanagement.[81]

Highly regarded privately-financed new towns, like Reston,

Va. and Columbia, Md., which sparked renewed interest in new towns in the early 1960s, too, fell victim to the tight money market of the recession. Reston developer Robert Simon ran out of money and surrendered control of the project to Gulf Oil, which bailed him out with $15 million. James Rouse, Columbia's creator, also rescued by corporate money, ceded one-half interest to his benefactor, Connecticut General Life Insurance Co.[81]

During 1975, HUD commissioned at least five studies of the new communities program. The reports outlined three general options: termination, limitation to a demonstration program and expansion. None of the evaluating papers flatly advocated the first alternative, though many concluded that the new community concept's downfall lay in the excessive financial burden placed on private developers -- a problem most easily solved through greater government involvement.[82]

From October to December, the New Communities Administration staff prepared an analysis of all new town projects. The study ranked the developments on six factors: financial analysis, moral commitment of the government, laboratory or experimental values, probability of refinancing, deadlines for refinancing and the probability of other parties forcing HUD to act. On those indices, Soul City ranked eleventh out of 13.[83]

HUD's self-scrutiny, which began in 1975, continued into 1976. A former director of the New Communities Administration recommended that HUD start afresh. New legislation, William Nicoson wrote, should replace Title VII as it replaced Title IV. He endorsed the change, not for legal or technical reasons, but "purely as a matter of public relations" because Title VII was

discredited. "There is nothing to be gained by efforts to combat the myth that it is unworkable legislation," Nicoson concluded. "It makes better legislative and administrative sense to start afresh with a new program under a new statute."[84]

Meanwhile, after the GAO audit's release and Soul City's apparent vindication, the project regained some momentum within HUD. In January 1976, the New Communities Administration board resolved to accede to McKissick requests for slightly preferential treatment in recognition of Soul City's "highly experimental" nature and the problems of "a different order of difficulty than those facing most new communities" confronting the project.[85] A later status report emphasized HUD's role and responsibility. "Soul City's success or failure depends to a large degree on whether HUD is willing to treat the project flexibly as a unique demonstration project, rather than addressing it solely as a financial investment to be justified only in a dollar and cents framework."[86] HUD gave some indications of doing just that. By October, Soul City had undergone a major review -- one that emphasized the project's "high risks and unique opportunities." The board reaffirmed its support by unanimously authorizing the release of a second $5 million installment of bonds.[87]

Normal political schedules, though, again interrupted Soul City's momentum and progress. Jimmy Carter wrested the presidency from Gerald Ford and in the transition, the New Communities Administration board of directors did not meet for almost a year (Dec. 10 '76 to Oct. 19 '77). During that year, major changes and decisions, which needed the board's blessing, could not occur. Instead, development of Soul City remained largely at a standstill.

"Once something is put on the shelf not to do anything for a year, to take it off the shelf in the federal government requires a great deal of action to take it down and put it in the mainstream of activity," McKissick recalls. McKissick and his staff, too, faced an entirely new HUD administration. "Then you had to stop and retool. You had to hold back again. You had a new man you had to go up there and explain the whole thing to. It held us back a whole lot."[88]

The future looked bright for Soul City in the early days of 1975. Development had finally begun in earnest in March 1974 after the issuance of federally-backed bonds. A series of factors, however, acted in tandem to inhibit growth and progress. The series of critical articles in The News and Observer could not have appeared at a worse time. When the new communities program in general spurred scrutiny, Soul City, singled out for criticism, received special attention. Although the GAO audit largely cleared Soul City firms from any wrongdoing, crucial months, when significant progress both in physical development and industrial recruitment could have occurred, slipped by during the report's preparation. Several more months passed before Soul City regained any semblance of the momentum it had. And then, a normal change of administration interrupted movement once again. It was not a series of events, designed to bolster the confidence of McKissick or his staff.

IV

The story of Soul City following the investigation by The News and Observer and the GAO audit is one of steady decline. And

the role of HUD became increasingly important as Soul City inexorably moved toward its denouement.

The first meeting of the new New Community Development Corp. board under President Carter, in October 1977, showed how pervasive and debilitating the events of 1975 proved. One board member repeated many past allegations, stating that the project was a perfect example of an "impossible situation" in which the federal government had knowingly played a role. Soul City, he argued, was approved for political "equal opportunity" reasons. To expect the project to make economic sense was unrealistic and HUD was now involved in nursing it along he said. HUD Secretary Patricia Harris directed the general manager to study Soul City come to grips with reality and present the board with an appropriate strategy. The board unanimously approved Harris' suggestion.[89]

The next meeting revealed disagreement between the New Communities Development Corp. staff and the six-member board of directors, which included only two holdovers from 1976. New General Manager William White recommended that for Soul City to secure necessary cooperation and grants from other agencies, "HUD must continue to display support for the project and to emphasize the innovative and experimental development opportunities inherent in developing Soul City." White further recommended that Soul City "be supported to the fullest -- and that the Board consider whether to specifically identify Soul City as demonstration of the potential of free-standing communities to revitalize depressed rural areas." And, White concluded by appealing to conscience and the values supposedly extolled by the Carter

administration. "With the legitimate and strong affirmative marketing and equal housing opportunity goals of this Department and the President's determined effort to advance the cause of minority groups, it may be that no other course would be compatible with the goals of this administration."[90]

The board members, perhaps more vulnerable and aware of political viccitudes, moral commitment, but instead focused on past criticism and possible future possible blame as evidenced by the following exchange:

> Victor Palmieri, a board member: As I remember, this was a Democratic Administration that put this in, wasn't it?
>
> White: It was purely Republican.
>
> Robert Embry, assistant secretary of CPD: In '68 the Republicans were in, that's no straddle.
>
> Palmieri: That's right, it is not straddle. That makes me feel better.[91]

For the first time, board members openly referred to Soul City in the most negative of terms. "What's your view of this disaster?" Palmieri asked. White replied: "It is that. It is a disaster." Also, the board first clearly contemplated withdrawing federal support from the project. "We have three years if we want to continue and try and turn this thing around and get some industrial development going," White told the board. "When it will happen, I have no idea. . .I think we have got three years to run before we have to really make the HUD decision of whether we go with it or shut it down. We can support the hell out of it and give it the best shot we've got and at the end of

a year or two years, take another look and decide to continue or fold it up. . .I think we need to really put our resources to work for a three-year period, even though we know in advance that at the end, it's good-bye."[92]

Palmieri agreed that it seemed "unjust to met to pull the string prematurely," but also warned -- using a revealing analogy to Viet Nam -- that it was "impractical and also unconscionable to live with this kind of taxpayer investment indefinitely, because it is going to get a lot worse. This is Viet Nam. It really is. It's harder each day to get out."[93]

Later in the meeting, board members and staff discussed various possibilities for industrial clients. Staff member Earl DeMaris said he had "talked to Governmental agencies who would have a reason to locate in the wilds." Palmieri discounted the probabilities of locating a federal facility "out in nowheres-ville in a black rural community." "It's going to be traumatic," Demaris agreed. White said McKissick had been negotiating with General Motors. GM "wanted a letter from me stating we were going to stay in this job forever," White said. "I wouldn't do it." Board members then speculated about attracting a European firm by using special incentives. The following exchange ensued:

> Neva Kaiser, board member: Is this going to look like a Tongsun Park activity if we pay them $20 million to locate there?
>
> Palmieri: I wish you hadn't put it exactly in those terms. I am not even going to answer it.
>
> Embry: Nothing is going to happen, so again it's perfectly legal, feasible, non-Tongsun Parkee.

Palmieri: Thank you.[94]

Yet, after the meeting, HUD Secretary Harris announced that Soul City comprised one of the federally assisted new towns that HUD would attempt to "salvage." Declaring that the new towns program has been "plagued by series of disasters," Harris said that the New Communities Development Corp. would undergo "major reorganization" and that several bankrupt towns had been closed down. HUD listed Soul City among six new town projects "currently judged to be capable of continued development with financial assistance from HUD." "Indicators are that the managers of Soul City are going to be able to provide the mix of housing construction that is going to make that development viable," Harris said. "Despite the fact the developer is black, that development has a chance of succeeding."[95]

Not surprisingly, The News and Observer found faults with HUD's calculations and decision. "Soul City. . .seems to have more lives than a cat," the Raleigh newspaper editorialized under the headline "Fresh dollars for Soul City." "Its longevity as a 'new community' can only be attributed to steady injections of political plasma in the form of U.S. dollars during the Nixon-Ford administrations. Now the Carter administration appears ready to take over the doctoring with the taxpayers' dollars." HUD's decision to try to salvage Soul City conflicted with the project's "spectacular failure in meeting its development goals. . .At this rate Soul City will be an applicant for urban renewal here it is finished." The News and Observer blamed both the developer and the federal government. "But enough is enough."[96]

Later in 1978, Soul City survived another round of reevaluation and retrenchment of the entire new communities program. Harris announced that HUD was shutting down its "sad, painful and expensive effort to create new communities. She also said that HUD planned to sell seven of the 13 projects and commit more money to the six others, including Soul City. One HUD official said the reputation of the program, $149 million in debt after eight years, was such that HUD "didn't want to tarnish the urban policy" with a new towns proposal.[97] HUD officials and other observers, in part, blamed the national economic climate, because the program began at the worst possible moment: the start of the 1973-74 recession, when demand for new housing shriveled. Michael Spear, former general manager of privately financed Columbia, Md., said: "Launching a new towns program in the early 1970s was like asking the Wright brothers to test their airplane in a hurricane and then concluding, when it crashed, that the invention did not work."[98] Soul City remained aloft -- but barely.

While the bureaucrats in Washington discussed how best to extract the government from the quagmire of Soul City, McKissick and associates continued to work on recruitment of industry and completing the infrastructure. While HUD administrators emphasized caution and "acceptable financial risk", Soul City officials saw delays and lack of commitment on the part of HUD. "We've been feasibilitied to death," McKissick said. "HUD wants us to play a symphony, but gave us only a five-piece band. They forgot we have a lot of rhythm, so we keep trying to run with a noose around your neck and a guillotine behind you."[99] For example, the

Soul City Co. requested permission to purchase a tract of land bordering the Seaboard Coastline railroad. Direct rail access, McKissick and others argued, would enhance Soul City's attractiveness to industry. HUD took almost a year to approve the acquisition, though it recognized the importance of the tract.[100]

Far away from the bureaucratic discussions, another side of the Soul City story evolved. This human side revealed much, not apparent in Washington.

Staff and residents coincided for most of Soul City's history. The project never reached the point of development where large numbers of people lived in Soul City. Those who did, however, confirmed many of the hopes and revealed many of the shortcomings of McKissick's vision.

When McKissick first announced Soul City, some area residents worried that the project would attract the same ghetto residents participating in the riots. "They thought the riff-raff, the scum, all the unemployed coloreds from up North would come down here. . ." remembered Gordon Bowen, an ice-cream delivery man. The new influx would be "like a cancerous sore," recalled A. D. Evans, owner of the general store on the other side of the railroad tracks from Soul City.[101]

Much early attention and speculation regarded the racial composition of Soul City. Immediately after the announcement, McKissick dismissed the notion that Soul City would be all-black. He also said age would be no restriction but that the immediate attraction will be for the young. "They will come from many places, and from all over the country. And there will be as many white as there are black."[102]

"There will be no 'quota system,'" said Carey. "We will create an atmosphere designed to attract people of all races."[103] Though McKissick never doubted that Soul City would be more black than white, he expressed confidence that whites would move there. "I've told my people we can't afford to develop a philosophy of hate and retribution," he said. "We have no time for hate. We've got to concentrate all our efforts on an aggressive, positive thrust if we're going to change society. I believe white people will come here because they will find the kind of society where they can be happy, safe and find the kind of opportunities that will be challenging to them. Our planning involves all ages of people. We're actively recruiting persons of all national origins. As I use to preach to industries in the past to hunt blacks, it will be our efforts to hunt whites."[104]

Yet, McKissick and his associates also announced on several occasions -- prematurely and speculatively perhaps -- the imminent arrival of large numbers of black residents. Carey, for example, said more than 100 black college students had asked to reside in Soul City within days of the Washington announcement.[105] "The city will probably attract many intellectual Negroes," said Eva Clayton, but "the town is designed for those who are now unemployed. It's an opportunity city." "That's definitely not true," she said to concerns that Soul City would bring in hoodlums and hippies.[106] McKissick, himself, said "We expect city people who want to go back, and rural people who want to produce." "We could move in 2,000 right away on the basis of the letters we have received," he boasted.[107]

At times, Soul City staff acceded to the concerns of white

residents. Although no system had been worked out, T. T. Clayton said, there would be some method of controlling the types of residents. "We'll have some control to be sure we get good, decent citizens," he said.[108]

Soul City's progress changed some minds. "They've got some of the cream of the crop in there," Evans said.[109]

Soul City, in its short and stunted life, did attract the disillusioned from the inner city. David Carolina came to Soul City in 1978 looking for work and a new home away from the ghetto life in Newark, N.J. He found a job as a maintenance man and a house in Soul City. "It's a pioneer city," said Carolina, a Sumter, S.C. native, "just like the beginning of the whole doggone country." Soul City also allured return migrants. Johnny Johnson, born in Warren County, left for New Jersey as a young wife. She had three children in Newark but always planned a return home. "We wanted to get (the children) out of that congested, dirty city," she said.[110]

Residents seemed to enjoy Soul City's isolation and atmosphere, and the project's slow growth, ironically, gave them the quiet community some left larger cities to seek. The Wright family, eager to move from a Pennsylvania city, out of a trailer and into a house, leapt at the opportunity in Soul City. "We were just looking for a place and the real estate broker showed us this house," said Mary Wright. "After we moved into the city we liked it better. Especially the recreational facilities. To be in a peaceful area and have people who are nice neighbors is important."[111]

Agnes Richardson graduated from John Graham High School in Warrenton in 1970, married her longtime boyfriend, James Smith, and moved north. But she soon returned, like a growing wave of return migrants. "I didn't like it," said Mrs. Smith of her two years in New York. "It was crowded." She left a year before her husband when she gave birth to a son and did not want him to grow up in the city. She took the bus back to Warren County. She found a job as a clerk-typist at Soul City, and after speedwriting and typing courses at nearby Vance-Granville Technical Institute, she became executive secretary to Gordon Carey. Three of her friends who moved north also applied for Soul City jobs. "You have a chance to get someplace here," she said.[112] Soul City also attracted young professionals, like the Crumps, who left a comfortable life in suburban Atlanta in September 1974. "It looked like the most God-forsaken place I'd ever seen in my life," Janice Crump recalls when she first saw Soul City. She had second thoughts about the move, but discovered a close-knit community of other professionals. "It was a very close, small group of people and we felt like old-day, old-fashioned pioneers -- just like we were out there really roughing it for something that was going really to be something one day. . .It was the kind of place that if you're young enough to dream about, and have a vision, you can actually stay there and cope with the tick and the mud and the lack of conveniences."[113]

In 1977, 30 of 100 residents were white. Most of the black residents were middle-aged, retired, middle-class. Most came to Soul City to escape the frantic pace and high cost of living in big cities. Green Duke lots priced from $3,500 to $6,000, homes

as little as $25,000, with a Farmers Home Administration loan, monthly mortgage no more than $125.[114] "Soul City is like a dream to me," said Roy Stokes, a young cabinetmaker, who, along with his wife a textile worker, paid $137 a month for a $25,000 white clapboard house. "When you say you're from here, you really have got something to brag about. You feel good." "People take such pride in their little homes," said Johnnie Johnson, who moved to Soul City after her husband died. Henry Chew, a retired Navy petty officer, moved from San Diego to a bright-yellow $31,000 home because he wanted the feeling of a "forty-niner" going to the frontier. He tried to persuade other Navy retirees to join him. "A lot of people with mixed marriages, especially, would feel welcome here." By early 1979, 220 people, all but four of the families black, lived in 33 houses and 33 trailers.[115]

For some, the Soul City experience proved disillusioning. In the summer of 1974, Maurice Crump quit his $15,000-a-year job in Atlanta to move to a young city with dreams as bold as his own. "I liked the concept of Soul City," said Crump, a construction estimator who got a job with WRPC. "Soul City had a 30-year development plan and government backing. My plan was to get to know the area and then open my own construction company." He lived in a stylish split level in 1979 and was president and owner of C and C Enterprises, a construction company. But the 34-year-old Aberdeen, Miss. native feared he is living in a dying city. "I hate that I built here now. I stuck a lot of money into something I thought would succeed and have federal backing. I don't know now what the future of Soul City will be."[116] Goerge Koonce shared similar fears and doubts about the future. He had an

ominous vision one day: "I saw people plucking chickens. All around them there was nothing but grass. I'm afraid Soul City is going to suffer."[117]

Back in Washington, in February 1979, Harris created a task force on Soul City, institutionalizing and culminating the concern expressed in previous board meetings.[118] While the task force met ten times between February and June, including a visit to Soul City, The News and Observer and Sen. Jesse Helms renewed their attacks. On May 1, Helms spoke before the Senate, calling Soul City a "particularly controversial boondoggle." He cited statistics on the number of residents (220) and a front-page article from The Wall Street Journal which focused on charges of nepotism and the McKissick family life style.[119] "An old 'new town' hangs on, sustained by federal money," the article proclaimed, and though Soul City lacked people and jobs, McKissick lived in style: a Maserati, a Pontiac Bonneville, a Mercedes in the garage; silver, china, a "big microwave oven," and a fireplace in a $300,000-plus house. "I owed that house to my wife," said McKissick. "I have a duty to my family that's been postponed for years." He also contended that "most people say, 'I'm glad to see a black man in a house like that, because I've never seen one in such a house before."[120] Again, as in 1974, McKissick wrote The Journal editor after the article appeared. "My house and my wife's automobile hardly seem to me to be national news," the letter read.[121] To many, though, including Helms, McKissick's lifestyle merited such attention. On the Senate floor, Helms asked: "Mr. President, how can such use of the taxpayers' money be justified? It cannot."[122]

In mid-May, The News and Observer reiterated and updated the charges from 1975 and leveled some new allegations, particularly at the federal government's treatment of Soul City. "Uncle Sam has treated Soul City like a favorite nephew, forgiving its shortcomings and sending more money," one article read under the headline: "Red tape, federal laws no problems when Soul City seeks new funds." And a HUD official said the government was not yet ready to give up. "I don't think we're at the stage where we say we failed on the whole thing and we should toss in the sponge," said William White, general manager of the New Community Development Corp. "I think that what we're going to do in this administration is to try every possible thing we can think about to help beef up this project."[123]

White and his fellow task force members brought the same message of reaffirmation and confidence to McKissick. "White came down and promised us everything in the world," McKissick recalls. "He told us we had a task force to continue Soul City that he was going to push this, he was going to push that and he didn't do it."[124] "We had worked very closely with the HUD task force, and we received all kinds of assurances from them. . . They clearly told us in every instance that the only purpose of the task force was to find a viable means of making the project work. . .that one of the options was not to close the project down," Carey recalls.[125] The HUD official who wrote the task force report confirms those impressions. "It was not cut and dry," remembers Roy Gast, who became project manager for Soul City. "No one knew that's how it would come out -- that there was no way of continuing it. That wasn't the intent in the beginning. . .There

was the initial direction to make it work."[126]

HUD commissioned AVCO Community Developers Inc., a California firm, to study Soul City and help the task force. AVCO, which found the project not viable and not salvagable, "looked at it like a real estate venture," remembers McKissick. "I felt the AVCO report was without foundation." Gast, though, recalls that the AVCO report did not exert a large influence on the task force. The report had "some influence, but even without the report, we would have come to the same conclusion. There were the same numbers, or the lack of numbers, should I say. . . The economics said there was no way it was going to go. Another $50 million, in the long run, would not have made the project viable."[127]

The task force unveiled its report to the New Communities Development Corp. on June 27, 1979. It accepted the AVCO analysis in principle, the task force told the board, arguing that the Soul City Co. would exhaust all cash in early 1980. The task force recommended that the board accept the AVCO report, consider foreclosure "but only as an option of last resort," and "move to acquire the property of the Soul City project with a deed in lieu of foreclosure as the preferred means." The development goals had not been met but that "in no way reflects adversely on the capability of the developer," the report stated. "Overwhelming odds made the dream impossible to realize in the location selected and at the scale necessary for new town development."[128]

The board, in endorsing the task force's report, chose the least costly alternative. It voted to acquire the project, resolving: ". . .the Board recognizes that the Project, because

of its unique position as a free-standing new town in an economically-depressed rural area, faced inherent and difficult economic development problems, and that since the inception of the Project the Developer and State and local public bodies have made a significant and permanent contribution to the economic development of the region."[129]

At the news conference announcing the decision the same morning, HUD officials continued to put on the best possible face. New Community Development Corp. general manager William White said HUD would acquire the assets either by negotiation or foreclosure, then would sell the assets. "We've learned a very expensive lesson," he said. White repeatedly defended McKissick, saying that poor location and the local economy doomed Soul City, not poor management. "Unfortunately, despite the most earnest efforts of Mr. McKissick, with the support of HUD, the dream of a prosperous community at Soul City simply did not materialize," he told reporters. "We're not blaming the thing on McKissick. The biggest thing he's lost is his dream."[130]

While HUD officials held the news conference in Washington, other HUD administrators notified McKissick in Soul City. Until they told him, though, he still held his dream. The staff had no real advance warning that when HUD officials scheduled a visit, they intended to end his vision, except when HUD did not return repeated calls the previous week. "But when you call the federal government and you can't reach nobody, you know something's up," McKissick recalls.[131]

The HUD officials walked into the office about noon, asked to see McKissick and then told him: "We hate to tell you this but

we're here to tell you that we're withdrawing. The government's going to withdraw support and close down Soul City." "I was cool," McKissick recalls of his immediate reaction, though he felt betrayed. He called together the staff and informed them. "I think everybody's morale was very low. Well, I think I was more disappointed than anything else. I suppose there was some anger but disappointment was the biggest thing."[132]

Administrative assistant Dorothy Waller remembers that day vividly: "It was like someone had passed away, like the entire staff had died. It was really bad there for a while and then we decided we wouldn't let it die. We would just continue until we couldn't continue any more."[133]

V

Dreams die hard, and McKissick's dream perished with more convulsions than most - in acrimonious negotiations and in the courts.

Following the announcement, a series of meetings, marked by emotional negotiations, ensued. "They were not very nice," recalls Roy Gast, who became Soul City project manager at the time. "It was a painful thing for McKissick and I think it was a painful experience for the board members." "They were not happy meetings at all," McKissick agrees.[134]

The tone of the meetings reflected the progress -- close to nil. The major issues revolved around how HUD would acquire Soul City, what compensation Soul City firms would receive and residents would weather the transition. Gast recalls the major consideration of the federal government: to "minimize the chaos,"

the "cost savings in terms of grief." "We had no responsibility to save the developer, but we did have the responsibility to save the development. We took that responsibility seriously." The most important interests of McKissick veered more toward the financial. "I was way out there on a limb: everything I owned and everything I attempted to own," McKissick recalls. "...(E)verything that I owned was in hock one way or the other." Gast agrees: "He was certainly taking it on the chin. A lot of developers in the same situation didn't put up the kind of money he put up, nor expose himself to the risks he exposed himself to on behalf of the project. It was a percentage of what his worth was, and it was 100 percent. You can't ask for more than that."[135]

With the negotiations going nowhere, both sides moved quickly toward conflict. McKissick went to Washington, gathering support for his campaign to force HUD to reverse its decision. He also telephoned blacks around the country and greeted scores of families that visited Soul City. Most significantly, McKissick received support from the N. C. Black Leadership Caucus, which made saving Soul City the first test of an effort to organize black power in the state. Later, more than 100 caucus members picnicked with their families at Soul City to affirm their support. They agreed that HUD succumbed to pressure from white, conservative political leaders in the state who feared a black takeover of the surrounding, predominantly black area arising from a successful Soul City. Residents, too, joined the effort. Johnnie Johnson, the first homewoner not connected with the project, wrote to Rep. Peter Rodino, D-N.J., of her former

home state. "Lord knows, I thought I was through marching," said the former civil rights activist, "that the struggle was over for me and that I could get a little peace. Now I guess we'll just have to start marching on HUD, and get back into political organizing."[136] On July 13, the Senate adopted an amendment proposed by Jesse Helms barring any further HUD aid to Soul City, except for projects obviously of benefit to the surrounding area. "Soul City and the other failures are dismissed by some observers as worthwhile dreams that simply never materialized," Helms told the Senate. "It is high time, however, that the Congress of the United States realize that the hard-pressed American taxpayers are sick and tired of paying for the foolish 'dreams.'"[137] On July 20, HUD sent letters notifying Soul City firms of its intent to discontinue grants. Five days later, HUD received a telegram from the Soul City Co. stating disagreement with that decision. For the next two weeks, HUD staff met with congressional staffs, state and local representatives and federal agencies trying to work out a solution. Gast, a self-described "flunky," recalls that he did not relish closing down Soul City, following the NCDC board's orders. "It was extremely difficult to puncture a man's dream." On August 17, The Soul City Co. sought and obtained a temporary restraining order effective for ten days enjoining HUD from foreclosing or taking other actions that would cause default or deprive residents of essential services. Four days later, the Soul City Co. failed on a $202,500 semi-annual interest payment on the bonds, though HUD information indicated that sufficient funds were available. The next day New Community Development Corp. general manager William White

sent a telegram to Soul City that agents would arrive the next day to inspect the records. Simultaneously, counsel for Soul City requested a hearing, charging that HUD had violated the restraining order. The court August 23 ordered the developer to make the records available August 27. The NCDC board unanimously resolved August 30 to reaffirm its direction that an acquisition plan be developed after being told that the Soul City Co. did not have funds for a drawn-out lawsuit.[138]

The first breakthrough in negotiations occurred in late October when both sides agreed to a "statement of principles" for a negotiated settlement. The plan included the transfer of most property to HUD and a $167,000 cash settlement. "As the cost of litigation could approach the amount of the settlement, such cash settlement would be in the best interests" of the United States, the general manager advised the board. The NCDC board approved the "statement of principles," following a "strategy designed to move the Soul City Co. to settle rather than litigate." In case, however, a trial date was tentatively set for October 1980.[139]

When the trial date was moved up to July 17, however, the pressure increased. Each side submitted proposals and counter proposals until May 16 when the Soul City Co. informed HUD that it would accept a settlement along the lines of the statement of principles. On June 26, the NCDC board approved the settlement, under which the HUD assumed ownership of the project in January.[140] We could have gone to trial," McKissick remembers, "but we wouldn't have had any money." HUD controlled Soul City funds; after the announcement of withdrawal no bank would lend Soul City money

and all creditors demanded cash. "They might as well have withdrawn it within 24 hours after announcement." In addition, McKissick's partners deserted him. "We would have been in court forever and I would have been the only one left," McKissick recalls.[141]

In the next six months, McKissick and his staff went through the painful chore or closing down. Stacks of mail came in from all over the country -- twice the amount than when Soul City continued in business -- and fewer employees were available. McKissick, himself, faced far more administrative and other duties. "I think I worked harder than I had ever worked before," he recalls. "I was the janitor, the bellhop, the trash-can man." The added work and the pressure of the situation weighed heavily on McKissick. "Here you know that you aren't going to get paid anymore. You've got all your obligations and you lost 12 years of your life. And now it all goes down the drain. And everyone is looking to you. You can no longer have the people at your disposal to get things done." McKissick also felt deeply for those people who had stayed with him from the McKissick Enterprises days, and even back to the CORE period. "I tried to keep them there, because I knew they had spent a great part of their lives in the movement with me." McKissick had reason to worry, for his closest associates felt almost as great a sense of loss as he did. "I was hurt deeply when I found out that I no longer had a job there," remembers Dorothy Waller. "I thought I was set for life."[142] In an ironic twist, as Soul City went through its death throes and staff left, the people for whom the project was geared -- low-income Warren County residents moved in.

"It became the kind of neighborhood that reflects what Warren County is," recalls one staff member who stayed.

In sum, closing down Soul City proved difficult, at times heart-wrenching. "Taking something down is more difficult than beginning something," McKissick recalls. "Dismantling something is much more difficult than building."[143] McKissick's words of wisdom proved especially true here, for he was not just dismantling an office or even a city but a dream. Dreams and visions begin easily; ending them, giving them up, however, takes much more stamina and courage.

The apparent final chapter to Soul City played itself out on the steps of the Warren County courthouse. Roy Gast, HUD project manager for Soul City, placed a $1.5 million bid on the government's behalf, the only bid when Soul City went on the auction block in a foreclosure sale. McKissick was elsewhere, unable to bear to see his dream, his vision sold.[144]

NOTES

[1]New Community Development Corp. (hereafter NCDC) board of directors meeting minutes, 14 November 1973, Department of Housing and Urban Development (hereafter HUD), Washington, D.C.

[2]Gordon Carey, personal interview, Raleigh, N. C., 8 March 1984.

[3]Soul City Foundation, SoulTech I Progress Report, 1 October-31 December 1973, p. 2.

[4]Ibid.; NCDC board minutes, 14 November 1973, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[5]Floyd McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N. C., 22 February 1984.

[6]The News and Observer, 12 November 1969.

[7]Durham Morning Herald, 29 August 1971, p. 10.

[8]Durham Morning Herald, 20 July 1973.

[9]Durham Morning Herald, 21 October 1973, p. 12.

[10]The New York Times, 22 December 1974.

[11]Durham Morning Herald, 21 October 1973, p. 12; The Fayetteville Observer Times, 7 July 1974.

[12]The Fayetteville Observer Times, 7 July 1974.

[13]Dorothy Waller, personal interview, Durham, N. C., 14 March 1984.

[14]The Charlotte Observer, 9 May 1971; Carlos C. Campbell, New Towns: Another Way to Live (Reston: Reston Publishing Co., 1976), p. 126.

As in the civil rights movement, lifestyles and views sometimes clashed; some staff members seemed as out of place as Soul City itself. New Yorker Stan Roman, director of the comprehensive health program, graduated from Dartmouth College in 1964 and Columbia University Medical School in 1968. He left a Harlem Hospital position for Soul City because he believed in the new town concept. But Roman, a Mercedes convertible-driving bachelor, exhibited "an urbane manner more befitting a society physician in Beverly Hills or his native New York City." Roman continued that lifestyle, while warning against the empathetic reaction to assume

local lifestyle, havits and dress. "Cultism can cause a deadening of creativity," he said. "Many of the people here reverted to the lifestyle that is peculiar to this area. What is needed here is an infusion."

[15]McKissick interview, 22 February 1984.

[16]Harvey Gantt, personal interview, Charlotte, N. C., 30 March 1984.

[17]McKissick interview, 22 February 1984.

[18]Gantt interview.

[19]McKissick interview, 22 February 1984.

[20]Randall Wayne Scott, "Money, Mind and Soul Make One City," Harvard Law School Bulletin 23 (October 1971), p. 17.

[21]Elizabeth Tornquist, personal interview, Durham, N. C., 21 October 1983.

[22]Daniel Pollitt, personal interview, Chapel Hill, N. C., 2 March 1984.

[23]McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N. C., 26 March 1984; NCDC, Soul City status report, 6 February 1975, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[24]Pollitt interview.

[25]NCDC, Soul City Status Report, 6 February 1975, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[26]The New York Times, 22 December 1974.

[27]Floyd McKissick, "The New Town as an Instrument of Social Change," speech delivered to the Reston Black Arts Festival, Reston, Va.; 31 August 1974, p. 1.

[28]The New York Times, 22 December 1974.

[29]Ibid.

[30]NCDC, Soul City Status Report, 6 February 1975, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[31]Pat Stith, telephone interview, Durham to Raleigh, N. C., 27 February 1984; Claude Sitton, telephone interview, Durham to Raleigh, N. C., 10 April 1984.

[32]The New York Times, 22 December 1974.

[33]Jeffrey Sammons, Soul City: Image and Reality, 25 January 1977, unpublished manuscript for Planning 238, Department of City

and Regional Planning, University of North Carolina.

[34]The Wall Street Journal, 31 July 1974, p. 1.

[35]The Wall Street Journal, 19 August 1974, p. 9.

[36]The Fayetteville Observer-Times, 7 July 1974.

[37]McKissick interview, 26 March 1984.

[38]Josephus Daniels, Editor in Politics (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941), p. 85; Charles W. Eagles, Jonathan Daniels and Race Relations: The Evolution of a Southern Liberal (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982), p. 9.

In a first-edition editorial, Daniels said The News and Observer would fulfill North Carolina's "need of a fearless newspaper at the capital of the State to expose the revolutionary proceedings of the men whom chance and conspiracy have temporarily put in control of the destiny of the Commonwealth." (Daniels, pp. 98-99)

His almost-obsessive antipathy for the Republican Reconstruction regime stemmed largely from his childhood in the black Second Congressional District, which spurred a lifelong fear of a return to "black domination." (Eagles, p. 9)

In the editorial explaining The News and Observer's purpose, Daniels also wrote: "The people of North Carolina are at heart patriotic, honest and conservative. They love peace, concord and justice. They want to control their own destinies and will not brook boss rule." (Daniels, pp. 98-99)

[39]Eagles, pp. 232-38; The News and Observer, 14 June 1963.

Jonathan Daniels controlled the newspaper's editorial policy for 25 years and continually from 1948 to 1965. Daniel's involvement in racial matters spanned the New Deal and continued into the 1960s civil rights movement. Few other southern liberals spoke out as long or as frequently. As editor of a family-owned newspaper, the younger Daniels had free reign, and The News and Observer's unchallenged dominance in eastern North Carolina gave him a solid platform for commentary. The News and Observer's forthright and independent policy earned it the nickname the "Nuisance and Disturber" throughout eastern North Carolina. (pp. xi-xiii)

In the 1930s and 1940s, "Lacking wide popular support, Daniels resorted to appeals for obedience to the law and the maintenance of social order as tactics to achieve greater racial justice in the South." He followed other southern liberals in his unwillingness to call for integration, but diverged in his opposition to federal anti-lynching and anti-poll tax laws. (p. 232)

After World War II, Daniels changed more slowly than many of his peers; he never condemned segregation nor praised the 1954 Brown decision, overturning the separate-but-equal theory. Rather, he continued to advocate the compromising prudent approach that characterized his views for 30 years. He worked to persuade both militant blacks and intransigent white to accept intermediate changes. He rejected confrontationand conflict and believed in cooperation and consultation between blacks and whites. "Somehow we've all got to learn that any real integration means putting the hearts and hands of good men together against the evil things in our society," he wrote. (pp. 233-34; The News and Observer, 14 June, 1963; The News and Observer, 4 July 1964)

[40]Eagles, p. 234.

[41]William H. Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; paperback ed., 1981), pp. 5-8.

[42]"Claude Sitton: That's What I Like About the South," in Howell Raines, My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), p. 378;381; Gay talese, The Kingdom and the Power (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1969), p. 141.

When Sitton started at The Times, he had dark hair, a limber gait and a benign expression -- "he seemed almost too bland for the assignment that would be his specialty: the Civil Rights movement in the South. But between 1957 and 1964 traveling thousands of miles a year, getting to know by heart the schedule of every airline operating in the South, getting to know the black preachers and redneck sheriffs, the young militants and dreamy blonde coeds who remporarity took leave of their segregated suburbs in the North to denounce the South -- Sitton superbly covered the story. He moved with it from town to town, little places that made headlines for a week and were not heard from again -- Poplarville, McComb, Sasser -- and he infused his reporting with the angry dialogue and grim detail that made it all seem so meaningful, if only for a day." (Talese, p. 141)

[43]Talese, p. 386.

[44]Raines, p. 381.

[45]The News and Observer, 19 January 1969.

[46]Ibid.

[47]The News and Observer, 2 March 1975, p. 1; Sitton interview.

[48]The News and Observer, 2 March 1975, p. 1.

[49]McKissick interview, 26 March 1984; Carey interview.

[50]David L. Paletz and Robert M. Entman, Media Power Politics

(New York: The Free Press, 1981; paperback ed. 1982) pp. 14, 201-2. See, for example, The New York Times, 9 March 1975, p. 34 and 18 May 1975, p. 23 for transmission of charges.

[51]The News and Observer, 5 March 1975, p. 1.

[52]The News and Observer, 5 March 1975, p. 4.

[53]The News and Observer, 6 March 1975, p. 1.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.; The News and Observer, 16 March 1975, p. 1.

[56]The News and Observer, 9 March 1975, p. 1; The News and Observer, 16 March 1975, p. 1.

[57]McKissick interview.

[58]The News and Observer, 21 March 1975, pp. 1, 5.

[59]The News and Observer, 9 April 1975, p. 1.

[60]The News and Observer, 10 April 1975, p. 1.

[61]Telegram, Armendaris to Soul City Co., 1 May 1975, appended to Soul City Foundation, Soul City: History of a Free Standing New Community, 1975.

[62]Letter, Margolies to Sitton, 24 April 1975, appended to Soul City Foundation, Soul City: History of a Free Standing New Community, 1975.

[63]The News and Observer, 18 June 1975, p. 1.

[64]NCDC, Soul City status report, 10 July 1975, pp. 2-4; HUD, Washington, D.C.

[65]Ibid., p. 10.

[66]The News and Observer, 29 July 1975, p. 1.

[67]McKissick interview, 26 March 1984.

[68]Addendum to October 1975 status report, 2 December 1975, HUD Washington, D.C.; The News and Observer, 17 December 1975, p. 1; The Washington Post, 18 December 1975, p. 3.

[69]General Accounting Office Report of the Comptroller General of the United States, Information on the New Community of Soul City, N. C., 18 December 1974, p. 2.

[70]GAO report, pp. 3-9.

[71]The News and Observer, 17 December 1974, p. 1.

[72]The News and Observer, 18 December 1975, p. 1.

[73]McKissick interview, 26 March 1984.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Waller interview.

[78]Charles Allen, telephone interview, Durham to Chicago, 21 March 1984.

[79]William Nicoson, Design of the New Communities Program, 28 September 1976, pp. 3-8; The News and Observer, 2 March 1975, p. 1.

[80]McKissick, "The New Town as an Instrument of Social Change," p. 10.

[81]Ronald Alston, "Portrait of a New City," Black Enterprise, August 1977, pp. 44-46.

[82]NCDC, Office of program and Policy Evaluation Summary Review of Options and Recommendations for the Title VII New Communities Program. The other Title VII new towns: Maumelle, Ark., Shenandoah, Ga., Park Forest South, Ill., St. Charles, Md., Cedar-Riverside and Jonathan, Minn., Grananda and Riverton, N. Y., Newfields, Ohio, Harbison, S. C., Flower Mound and The Woodlands, Texas.

[83]NCDC, project analysis, 2 December 1975, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[84]Nicoson, p. 101. Nicoson directed the New Communities Administration from January 1970 to May 1972.

[85]NCDC, resolution, 26 January 1976, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[86]NCDC, board report, 16 March 1976, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[87]NCDC, board action report, minutes, 17 October 1976, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[88]McKissick interview, 26 March 1984.

[89]NCDC, minutes, 19 October 1977, HUD Washington, D.C.

[90]NCDC, project briefing, 18 January 1978, HUD Washington, D.C.

[91]NCDC, transcript, 18 January 1978, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[92]Ibid.

[93]Ibid.

[94]Ibid. Park was involved in a 1976 bribery/tax fraud scandal.

[95]The News and Observer, 19 January 1978, p. 1.

[96]The News and Observer, 23 January 1978, p. 4.

[97]The Charlotte Observer, 29 September 1978.

[98]Time, 16 October 1978.

[99]The Wall Street Journal, 19 April 1979, p. 1.

[100]NCDC, status report, 10 July 1975 and resolution, 21 June 1976, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[101]The News and Observer, 4 November 1973.

[102]The News and Observer, 15 January 1969; Durham Morning Herald, 15 January 1969; The News and Observer, 19 January 1969.

[103]The News and Observer, 11 February 1972.

[104]Greensboro Daily News, 3 June 1973.

[105]The News and Observer, 15 January 1969.

[106]The News and Observer, 22 January 1969.

[107]The News and Observer, 13 February 1969.

[108]Durham Morning Herald, 9 March 1969.

[109]The News and Observer, 4 November 1973.

[110]The Charlotte Observer, 30 June 1979, p. 1B.

[111]Ibid.

[112]The News and Observer, 28 September 1975, p. 4.

[113]Janice Crump, personal interview, Durham, N. C., 3 November 1983.

[114]Alston, pp. 44, 48.

[115]The Wall Street Journal, 19 April 1979, p. 1.

[116]The News and Observer

[117]The Wall Street Journal, 19 April 1979, p. 1.

[118]NCDC, board meeting, 26-27 June 1979, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[119] Congressional Record, Vol. 125, No. 52, 1 May 1979.

[120] The Wall Street Journal, 19 April 1979, p. 1.

[121] McKissick to The Wall Street Journal editor, 23 April 1979.

[122] Congressional Record, Vol 125, No. 52, 1 May 1979. The Wall Street Journal 19 April 1979, p. 1.

[123] The News and Observer, 13 May 1979, p. 1.

[124] McKissick interview, 26 March 1984.

[125] Carey interview.

[126] Roy Gast, personal interview, Washington, D.C., 7 March 1984.

[127] McKissick interview, 26 March 1984; Gast interview; NCDC, Report of the Soul City Task Force, 27 June 1979, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[128] NCDC, Report of the Soul City Task Force, 27 June 1979, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[129] NCDC, minutes, 27 June 1979, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[130] The News and Observer, 27 June 1979, p. 1; The Charlotte Observer, 27 June 1979, p. 2B; The New York Times, 29 June 1979, p. 12.

[131] McKissick interview, 26 March 1984.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Waller interview.

[134] McKissick interview, 26 March 1984; Gast interview.

[135] Ibid.

[136] The New York Times, 3 July 1979, p. 6, 27 August 1979, p. 12.

[137] Congressional Record, Vol. 125, No. 94, 13 July 1979.

[138] NCDC, project acquisition report, minutes, 30 August 1979, HUD, Washington, D.C.; Gast interview; The New York Times, 19 August 1979, p. 16, 25 August 1979, p. 2, 28 August 1979, p. 14.

[139] NCDC project summary report, 17 March 1980, HUD, Washington, D.C.

[140] NCDC, board report, 26 June 1980, HUD Washington, D.C.; The News and Observer, 27 June 1980, p. 1.

[141] McKissick interview, 26 March 1984.

[142]McKissick interview, 26 March 1984; Waller interview; Crump interview.

[143]McKissick interview, 26 March 1984.

[144]The News and Observer; McKissick interview, 26 March 1984; The Charlotte Observer, 31 January 1984, p. 33.

EPILOGUE

LEGACY

I

In the wake of Soul City's apparent death, more than a few people conducted autopsies. Several causes seem beyond dispute. The Department of Housing and Urban Development, for all its profound misunderstandings, recognized important facts. Soul City's first priority, HUD argued, was to attract industry. Thus, the emphasis in the early years fell on establishing the absent infrastructure -- water, sewerage, roads. Industrial recruitment on a prospective basis proved formidable. "That's I guess where we had the most difficulty, but we never gave the industrial marketer a deck of playing cards that had all the cards in it," recalls Gordon Carey, Soul City Co. general manager.[1] As the infrastructure neared completion, however, that very success spawned the first major press attack and then a government audit. The project lost momentum it never regained. The recruitment of industry -- always a difficult task for Soul City -- proved near impossible with the pallor cast by the scrutiny. Despite McKissick's efforts, Soul City never landed a major industry. Without industry, Soul City's financial condition steadily worsened. No jobs attracted few residents and the Soul City Co. sold no land for homes and reaped no revenues. In the end, the project's only hope lay in the federal government locating a major facility there. A cautious government declined.

Projections during Soul City's genesis proved illusory. Growth did not proliferate along Interstate 85. Thus, based on assumptions of future growth, economic consultants during the first years predicted success and helped convince McKissick to broaden his vision from trading posts and farming communes to a town of 18,000 to a city of 50,000 or more. As the 1970s progressed, developments and the general economic climate revealed the fallacy of early projections. The last analysis done of Soul City, the AVCO Community Developers study commissioned by the HUD task force on Soul City, found the project not feasible. McKissick says simply: "We got caught in the worst years in history."[2]

Soul City, despite its distinctions from other federally funded new towns, and perhaps partly because of those differences, shared a similar demise. Throughout the Soul City's life, and especially after 1975, HUD reevaluated the entire new communities program. HUD itself was not quite sure of what the new towns program meant. Clearly, then, Soul City's primary benefactor often wavered in its support of new towns; when new towns ran into financial difficulties HUD became wary. Invariably, the phenomenon happened as new towns developed -- or rather did not develop -- during the heights of the 1970s recession. The changing political climate never encouraged sustained growth and progress for new towns, which typically projected a 30-year or more development. Politicians required and perhaps expected immediate results. Once infused with political controversy, the new communities program could not survive.

Though Soul City was the only free-standing new town and the

only one primarily developed by a black, it never received designation as an experimental community and the subsequent special aid. Soul City included more social goals than other new towns, though it was a business enterprise of the most potentially profitable sort. The two emphases, institutionalized in the alter egos of the Soul City Co. and the Soul City Foundation, found full expression in McKissick's strivings. He never fully reconciled the two. HUD, recognizing Soul City's innovative value and special needs, discussed the possibility of making Soul City a demonstration project on several occasions but never fully took the step. HUD, then, aborted the "vital experiment" before all the ingredients reacted. "They did not even allow us an equal opportunity to fail," McKissick once said.[3] Rather, Soul City's unique traits proved to seal its undoing. Its rural location hampered both the recruitment of industry and residents. Its image as all-black, evoked largely by its name, and the reputation of its founder aggravated public skepticism and scrutiny and political opposition. Soul City appealed to the strivings of many blacks, particularly residents of the surrounding area and the growing wave of return migrants. McKissick's choice to support Richard Nixon, though, alienated other potential support. The project, too , never elicted anywhere near the enthusiasm from white citizens nor the state's political leadership. Instead, politicians like Sen. Jesse Helms joined media critics, like The News and Observer, in the siege of Soul City. For many, the bold laternative, as one promotional pamphlet proclaimed, seemed much too audacious.

In the final analysis, however, the fatal blow was that too few people shared, or even comprehended, McKissick's vision.

As he once said: "Soul City is almost a religious idea. It can't be judged in a white man's terms."[4] The project, though, was continually judged by criteria set largely by whites, who acted from different perceptions. Those evaluations, largely beyond McKissick's control, determined Soul City's fate.

II

In its wake, Soul City also left behind fertile ground for future growth, including a regional water system. Soul City failed financially, but succeeded in planting the seed. The future growth seems already to have begun in the area surrounding the actual Soul City site. "A rural backward county is going to be something better than it was before because of Soul City," says HUD project manager Roy Gast. "I think this was a dream. I think every new town was a dream."[5]

Soul City's legacy, perhaps most significantly, finds expression in people. Many people invested years of their lives. The staff members who followed McKissick from the civil rights movement to McKissick Enterprises and then to Soul City invested the most of all. A case in point: Dorothy Waller put ten years into Soul City and lost her house when she left. She recalls: "For a while there, I thought I had wasted ten years. . .I really loved the place. . .It was challenging and it was such a beautiful, quiet place. . .It was just an ideal place I had dreamed of for years."[6]

Soul City, too, proved a crucial learning experience and a stepping stone for some. Many persons associated with Soul City progressed to greater achievements. Eva Clayton, director of the

Soul City Foundation, now chairs the Warren County commissioners. She calls her Soul City experience, which "brought into focus" the public-private relationship and the politics of implementation, "excellent learning." The boldness of Soul City, Clayton recalls, attracted bright people. "Instead of the disillusionment, I think it makes some of us even more determined that the system ought to work."[7] Charlotte elected Harvey Gantt, director ofplanning during the early years, its first black mayor last fall. "The mayor ought to be someone with some vision," Gantt emphasized during his campaign, a focus that echoed well with The Charlotte Observer, which endorsed his "impressive vision."[8]

And Floyd McKissick -- the attorney -- holds court these days in a storefront law office facing the Hardee's on Oxford's main street. McKissick's office reflects the various strains of his life -- certificates and commendations from civil rights groups line one wall in the waiting room; issues of Black Enterprise magazine cover the waiting room table; legal diplomas and documents surround his desk. It's also somehow symbolic that he spends much of his time in Oxford, halfway between Durham, where his civil rights career began in earnest as a North Carolina College student, and Soul City, where his civil rights activism and an obsessive vision propelled him.

McKissick sounds tired now, but his vision -- a little frayed around the edges -- remains. He may have been ahead of the larger society -- his vision prophetic rather than timely. McKissick, still a Soul City resident, plans to wait for that time. "I don't ever intend to leave," he says. "I think Soul City is very important. It's so important that I intend to spend the rest of

my life working and developing Soul City. . .because what I believed is there and it's right."[9]

NOTES

[1]Gordon Carey, personal interview, Raleigh, N. C., 8 March, 1984.

[2]Floyd McKissick, personal interview, Oxford, N. C., 10 April 1984.

[3]The New York Times, 27 August 1979, p. 12.

[4]The Wall Street Journal, 19 April 1979, p. 1.

[5]Roy Gast, personal interview, Washington, D.C., 7 March 1984.

[6]Dorothy Waller, personal interview, Durham, 14 March 1984.

[7]Eva Clayton, personal interview, Warrenton, N. C., 2 April 1984.

[8]The Charlotte Observer, 30 October 1983, p. D2, 6 November 1983, p. D1.

[9]McKissick interview, 10 April 1984.

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